



Around The State

January 2014

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR—EVENTS

[New Year's Eve: Last Cup of Hot Cocoa](#), Anchorage, 12/31

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RECENT EVENT HAPPENINGS

[Techno Time](#),

December 8

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[Ninth Annual Geofest](#),

Anchorage, December 13

[Geo Cashing Alaskan Style HOLIDAY BASH](#),

Fairbanks, 12/15

[Holiday Coffee: Eastbound and down, a TB exchange](#),

Homer, 12/22

President's Corner

By Wes Skinner / NorthWes



Welcome to 2014! With a new year we have some new folks on your Board of Directors. Take time to read their introductory remarks elsewhere in this newsletter, and be sure to tell them what you'd like your statewide geocaching organization to do in this new year.

One area I'm asking everyone (board and members alike) to do more in 2014 is to host more neighborhood CITO events. We already have a three times yearly cleanup of the Seward Highway down near Girdwood, as well as the newly-minted HOB0 cleanup series which was a great success last year (and is expected to continue in 2014). However, we geocachers need to bring our Cache In Trash Out philosophy to our neighborhood parks in the form of short well-organized events to sweep up visible trash. A CITO event is simple to organize and execute, and land managers appreciate geocacher volunteers who make their parks look pristine around parking lots, visitor centers and trailheads. A little bit of work on our part goes a long way in helping those land managers understand our appreciation for permission to play on public lands! Watch for an article in the near future about how to host your very own local CITO event (with GeocacheAlaska! Inc. support).

Reviewer's Corner

By Michael Malvick / Greatland Reviewer



Archival of Old, Seemingly Abandoned Draft Cache Pages

Groundspeak recently requested its Volunteer Reviewers to look at unpublished cache pages that are more than six to twelve months old and archive those that don't appear to be works in progress. Of the nearly 132,000 caches that met this criterion, more than 400 dating back to 2006 were in Alaska. I started reviewing and archiving unpublished caches, beginning with the oldest and working to the newest and got up unpublished caches that were one to two years old when Groundspeak completed an automatic script to finish the archiving work during the week of December 15th.

As stated in the archival notes posted by either me or Groundspeak, any of the old cache pages can be unarchived upon request. Just send me an e-mail note **with the GC#(s)** through my Reviewer account at greatlandreviewer@geocachingadmin.com with your request and I will unarchive the cache pages. Note that if you are using a cache page as a geocoin or photo storage vault, you may continue to do so without having the page unarchived.

The reason the old unpublished cache pages were archived is because they cause conflicts with some of the tools in the Reviewer toolbox. For example, when the Reviewer does a proximity check to verify compliance with the 528' proximity guideline, all unpublished caches appear as well as the published caches. The Reviewer can tell which caches are published, which have been submitted for Review, and which have not been submitted for Review. However, what the Reviewer can't tell without opening the cache page is whether or not the page is a work in progress. If it's a work in progress, the Reviewer will give preference to the first cache submitted for a spot because some caches take time to develop and in some parts of the world, permits take many weeks to months to obtain.

To avoid having your cache page(s) caught in future sweeps, you should edit the cache page or post a Reviewer Note to the cache page indicating the page is a work in progress at least quarterly. The autoarchive script will check the last revision date for the cache page or the most recent Note posted to the page and bypass those pages that show recent activity.

If you want to locate your archived caches, log onto your geocaching.com account and navigate to the [Geocaches option on your geocaching.com Profile](#). There is a sidebar on the right titled "Your Geocaches Awaiting Publication." Click "Show Archived" and any caches archived in this week's sweep will show up there with a line through them.

For more information, click [here](#) for the Groundspeak Knowledge Book article on this subject.

Sandbox Snippets

By Joel Vos / NeverSummer

What your committees are up to...

Happy New Year, members! There are many exciting things in store for all of us in the game of Geocaching, and many more things worth celebrating from the last year. From new annual events, to annual celebrated traditions, new geocaches, to plans to visit some of the oldest, we have a lot to look forward to here in Alaska in 2014.

One of the features for the monthly newsletter that I will be trying to work on for 2014 is going to be an update on what your GeocacheAlaska! Committees are up to. There is a lot that goes on behind the scenes to keep the organization running: Continuing efforts to foster positive relationships with land managers; Developing new and exciting fundraising opportunities like specialized cache containers, geocoins and pathtags; Creating and maintaining relevant educational materials, and developing EduVents to reach across our great state; Getting people together to have fun, learn more about GeocacheAlaska!, and just be plain old silly in public.

This behind-the-scenes activity occurs at the Board meetings and on our GeocacheAlaska! forums, and most of the committee work happens behind closed forum doors. Those committee-only forums are sometimes fondly referred to as "The Sandbox", and therefore we have this new monthly article, "Sandbox Snippets" to tell you about what's in the works on your behalf.

My goal is to produce a small summary of what you might not get to see if you're not checking in at the GeocacheAlaska! forums or facebook page. The amount of activity varies from season to season and month to month, but I hope to keep you all informed. If you have questions, comments, or concerns about the Monthly Sandbox Snippets, please contact me through my Geocaching.com profile, or at neversumm3r@gmail.com, and I will get right back to you.

This month especially, it's worth pointing out that there will be some new faces in the crowd. Folks like myself who have been voted onto the board will be starting to work on new Committees, and will actively seek folks who can help, or have an interest in helping on a committee. Whether Advocacy, Education, Events,

or Fundraising, if you have an interest, get involved! This is your organization!

One of the news items involves the use of social media. There has been lots of talk about how to engage our membership base, as well as the general public on outlets like Facebook and Twitter. Be sure to stay tuned for the 2014 Membership Survey. The Board of Directors will be looking forward to your input about our outreach efforts. We're already seeing great participation on the Facebook Group, and SSO JOAT has been keeping on top of Twitter posting.

Next up for your update, the Education Committee will be starting anew with planning EduVents. There will be some updates to the existing PowerPoint slideshows, and you should start to see the new versions uploaded to the GeocacheAlaska! website as they are published. There are also plans to create a "Partnering with Agencies" presentation. Stay tuned for that.

Other big events are in the works, and you really don't want to miss the planning for the new recurring Hobo CITO events or The Kenai Picnic. The first steps of planning are underway, and you won't want to miss out on helping out or attending! And, even though it has just passed, Geofest should also get onto your radar for the coming year. These annual events don't run themselves, and your planning and participation is what makes them so much fun!

Fundraising Committee is working on Bling 2014 endeavors, and the working pathtag theme for the year will be Alaskan Birds. Stay tuned once the new Board is seated, and Committees are finalized for more information about creation contests and the development of the new bling. If you want to get involved with the Fundraising Committee, or want to learn more about how pathtags and geocoins are made, get in touch with the Committee Chair.

Our Advocacy Committee shared some great recognition from the Bureau of Land Management last month for our organization's involvement in Federal Public Lands Day back in September. Folks are also working on partnerships with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, with a plan to have a renewed version of the Blue Goose GeoTour to come in 2014 and more. There will assuredly be more news to share in a little while after Committees get some time to get back to work after the Holidays.

And there's your January update from the Sandbox. Don't forget to get involved with your Committees!

2014 GeocacheAlaska! Calendars Now Available!!!



Alaskan geocachers submitted their favorite Alaskan caching photos to the scrutiny of their peers and the thirteen favorite photos were chosen to adorn the cover and pages of this 2014 calendar. There are even more photos on the back cover!

These calendars are printed at Zazzle.com and you may view all the photographs by clicking [here](#). Calendar size is nominally 8.25" x 10.5" closed and 16.5" x 10.5" open.

Calendars may be purchased online by clicking [here](#). The price per calendar is \$20 for Geocache-Alaska! Sourdough members and \$23 for all others, plus shipping.

Many thanks to Anchorage cacher [SSO JOAT](#) for making this calendar possible!



President, Wes Skinner / NorthWes



Favorite geocaching experiences: Anything involving finding EarthCaches, and finding cache locations featuring astounding natural scenery. During my first year of caching back in 2004, my wife and I discovered a love of hiking in slot canyons while looking for GC-CA5F Lake Mead Cache #1 Anniversary

Mine. Now, we look at the geocaching.com website to help plan where to visit around our travel destinations, which means over half my cache finds are from over a thousand miles from home here in Alaska! I'm also an avid benchmark hunter, and have made just over 1,200 finds (including some finds which were the first recovery of the benchmark since it had been placed). On many trips, I'm more likely to look for benchmarks than geocaches because of the history behind the mark's placement.

Life outside Geocaching: I'm a grandfather, a deacon (servant) in my local Baptist church, and the human part of a pack of poodles – a toy and two standard poodles (the big spoos like to geocache, and to hijack Ladybug Kids' geovehicle). The opportunity to retire in the manner I'd like to be accustomed to hasn't occurred yet, so I can be found working in between the opportunities to attend events and look for caches.

Pet Peeve: Meaningless or deceptive hints and the lack of attributes on a cache listing frustrate me on behalf of new cachers, as they don't build up success in the game. Introductory-level caches should help build cacher confidence in making finds with meaningful hints and descriptive attributes, not frustrate them to the point of quitting.

Favorite Thing(s): My wife's company, geocaching on a road trip, a great dog walk with the spoos where we find a cache or two along the way, and visiting warm sunny places aboard a cruise vacation.

Something you would never guess about me: I enjoy teaching adult Sunday School classes at my church.

Travel Wishes: I'm looking forward to traveling to the far northeastern states of Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, as well as to

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the central states from Texas north to the Canadian border in an effort to finish off finding caches in all 50 states. I'd like to return to Europe and cache across the continent as well.

Vice-President. Cameron Gilchrist / AlaskaCariboozer



Favorite caching experience: [Red Herring, GC44NZG](#). It was a high-wire act, with the best elements: my wife, snow, a beautiful spring Sunday afternoon, and snowshoes. No clothes were torn nor limbs broken).

In my non-geocaching mode, which is more often than not, I am married to Marlys (SnowySwan) and we have three young, active boys. Reid is almost 8 and enjoying 2nd grade, Drew is 5 and loves kindergarten and skiing, and Brady is nearly 3 and in charge of the family! Outside family life, I am an investment and insurance advisor with Thrivent Financial here in Anchorage.

Pet Peeve: living in my house while part of it is being remodeled

Favorite Things: in no particular order - chocolate, brownies, hunting, any outdoor recreational activity with my boys, camping, (Hope, Alaska), gardening

Travel wishes: Hawaii with my family, NOW!

Treasurer, Roberta Bromlow / Polgera



Favorite Geocaching Experience: My favorite geocaching experience has to be the time I went to the Mega Event in Washington with my son, my daughter-in-law, and the two grand babies (at that time they were 3 and about 8 months). Levi, the 8-month old was the youngest cacher on the trail. Asher, the three-year old would not look at the ape that was communing with cachers at the A.P.E. cache.

Today the boys are 5 and 3 and still love to cache with grandma and the family.

Life outside Geocaching: Sewing, knitting, triathlon, teaching college part-time. And in my spare time...

Pet Peeve: People who ask a question and then do not listen to the answer.

Favorite Thing(s): Family, good friends, and wine

Something you would never guess about me: I have 7 siblings, I bottle wine, and I am Basque

Travel Wishes: Spain, to visit relative; Fiji, to dive; Bora Bora, just because

Secretary, Michael Malvick / Ladybug Kids



Favorite Geocaching Experience: It's really difficult to choose a favorite experience, but anything that involves visiting new places with caches as a guide generates lots of memories. Some of my favorite experiences include collaborating with Dutch geocacher [Johny Cache](#) and Swiss geocacher [Worlddiver](#) on a 12-day, 12-country, Euro-journey wrapped around a business trip to France. We visited old castles, an Italian town destroyed by an earthquake now undergoing rebirth as an artist colony, and ate lots of great food chased by terrific beers. Caching experiences in Portugal, Croatia, and Slovenia also rate up there along with a geo-pilgrimage to the Original Stash Plaque with [akgh519](#) that included visiting several other

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old caches in Washington and Oregon and the Ape Cave, a seven-state geo-odyssey during summer 2013 with my brother and nephews that included Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, and recently caching in Prague with [bilakmato](#) and running around the desert outside Las Vegas with [Aeon](#) and dozens of other cachers from around the world.

Life outside Geocaching: I have a wife and two daughters that engage in caching primarily only during road trips in the lower-48. Together, we are alphas to a micro kennel of eight sled dogs that pull either a sled or a Nordic skier (skijoring) and a Chihuahua. Professionally, I am a process engineer for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Recreationally, I Nordic ski, orienteer, hike, mountain bike, road bike, canoe, kayak, and packraft.

Pet Peeve: Cachers who write a “Needs Maintenance” log on a cache they haven’t actually found along with cachers who write something along the lines of “this is my third attempt at this cache,” yet the cache logs don’t contain any DNFs (we log all our cache attempts in an attempt to stay ahead of L1lgray’s DNF count).

Favorite Thing(s): Showing my daughters the wonders of the human and natural world. Taking our sled dogs on an evening alpine ridge run in the front range of the Chugach Mountains to watch the sun set behind the Alaska Range. Skijoring right after a new snowfall through some of Anchorage’s winter wonderland.

Something you would never guess about me: Despite the appearance of me being organized, my home office and garage are on the verge of being declared National Disaster Areas.

Travel Wishes: I want to further explore Eastern Europe and experience the ongoing vibrant progression the people there have made during the past twenty-five years. More distant places in Asia (India, China, Vietnam), Africa (SRA, Kenya, Egypt, Israel), and South America (Machu Pichu, Patagonia) are also on my bucket list.

Member at Large, Joel Vos / NeverSummer



Favorite Geocaching Experience: My first find all by myself. I had “stash hunted” back in 2001 in college, but hadn’t yet learned about geocaching.com. When my aunt (ohjoy!) took me out for my first “official” hunt in 2005, we found 3 caches. She showed me the ropes, gave me some hints, and then we went back

to create and account and log my finds. It wasn’t until I went back home to Portland that I turned on my computer, looked for nearby caches, entered them in my GPS and went out to search on my own. It was an amazing feeling when I made my first geocaching find, especially as some of my first logs were DNFs. It was a feeling that I still have each time I open and sign a logbook to this day.

Life outside Geocaching: I am an avid downhill skier in the wintertime, and have enjoyed the backcountry skiing time I’ve had since moving to Alaska. I also love to go birding, biking, cross-country skiing, fly fishing, cooking and camping. There really isn’t much that I don’t love to do in the outdoors, and I think this is why geocaching has been such a great hobby for me. My wife and I moved to Alaska from Minnesota in May of 2012, and have enjoyed so much about this great state. Born and raised in Minnesota, I lived in Portland, OR for 5 years before going back to Minnesota to go to grad school. By the time this newsletter is published, I will have completed my Master of Education degree! Next up, a new dog for our family, and more adventures around Alaska!

Pet Peeve: People who don’t use their blinkers when driving.

Favorite Thing(s): Skiing, fishing, the outdoors, great food, dogs, Subarus, and my wife!

Something you would never guess about me: I’ve never been to a theme park ever, anywhere. I was brought up camping at state and national parks around the nation.

Travel Wishes: To visit my sister in England, and explore more of Europe with her and her husband.

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Webmaster, Scott Aleckson / SSO JOAT



Favorite Geocaching Experience: Back when I first started caching, took a couple friends on a caching day trip from Soldotna to Homer with no plan except to visit caches as we came upon them. It was all fairly new and we had a great day just exploring together.

Life outside Geocaching: I spend most of my time working as a Medic in the oil industry.

Pet Peeve: Caches not put back exactly where and how the CO hid them.

Favorite Thing(s): Building cool puzzle caches and meeting other cachers at fun social events.

Something you would never guess about me: I don't spend very much time going out geocaching.

Travel Wishes: I would like to spend a couple weeks traveling around Alaska, camping, caching, and seeing all the hidden locations that caching is good at sharing.

Member at Large, John Scoblic / Scobey



Favorite Geocaching Experience: Southern California caching with Ladybug Kids and NorthWes

Life outside Geocaching: Retired bum

Pet Peeve: Obama

Favorite Thing(s): Reading

Something you would never guess about me: I like sleeping

Travel Wishes: To go to the Philippines to live.

Member at Large, Dana Rosso / DR-AK



Favorite Geocaching Experience: My favorite experiences while geocaching is when I get to share the excitement of finding the cache with my daughter KR-AK.

Life outside Geocaching: I am a Photo Journalist for the Air Force Reserve, it is a full time DoD civilian position. I also am an active member of the Air Force Reserve,

Pet Peeve: Being late; I would rather be 30 mins early for something then to be running behind.

Favorite Thing(s): Geocaching, spending time with friends and family. I am always happy to enjoy an outdoor adventure.

Travel Wishes: I would like to go back to all of the states and countries that I have visited during my time with the Air Force and spend some time geocaching. I am sure that I have missed out on finding a lot of great caches across the globe...some day I will get back out there and enjoy the find.

Member at Large, Anthoney Roof / firemanak



Vote for Groundspeak's Geocacher of the Month NOW!

Our President, [NorthWes](#), has been nominated for Geocacher of the Month at [The Geocaching Blog](#) at Groundspeak. He's up against a gal from Puerto Rico and a guy from Iowa. **We only have until DECEMBER 30 to vote!** You may vote as a GUEST, using just a name and an email. It is important to include WHY you vote for Wes. The comments will be reviewed by the committee making the final decision. Spread the word - fast and far! **Go [here](#) and type in a comment at the bottom of the page naming [NorthWes](#) as your favorite for the international recognition of Geocacher of the Month.** Not sure what to say? Here is some of what NorthWes is about (written by Mike Malvick/ LadyBugKids):

Wes Skinner, also known as [NorthWes](#), began geocaching on September 10, 2004, after learning about the game through a program at his daughter's ([Beluga183](#)) school. His enthusiasm for the game quickly gathered momentum and in addition to finding caches, NorthWes also started placing caches, adopting caches, hosting events to build a sense of caching community, and building relationships with local Land Managers.

NorthWes currently has 120 caches under his account. Most take people to scenic locations and many of those are recognized with favorite points. Of special note are [Turnagain Arm Tidal Bore Earthcache](#) (GCN6YV), Alaska's first EarthCache, [Serenity View](#) (GCNGKC), located on a bluff in Anchorage's Kincaid Park that features sweeping views of Cook Inlet, four mountain ranges, and at least three volcanoes, [Kenai Overlook](#) (GC149XQ), featuring a view of Kenai Lake in Cooper Landing, and [Tram at Winner Creek Gorge](#) (GCWARK) which requires cachers to cross a gorge above a roaring glacier fed river using a hand operated cable tram.

NorthWes' sense of a special place is supported by a strong desire to learn about and share the history of the location, which explains his penchant for developing historical caches such as [Swords into Plowshares](#) (GCNPAP) and developing ([1964 Alaska Earthquake: Government Hill Landslide](#) (GC2WRQB), one of six he's created) and finding EarthCaches (he is an [Platinum EarthCache Master](#)). NorthWes is also an avid benchmark seeker, having recovered and logged more than 1200 benchmarks to date, and encourages Cachers to participate in benchmarking with placement of "two-fer" caches such as [BULWARK](#) (GC3097X) and [Can't See the Forest for the Trees...](#) (GCY1TT).

NorthWes has a strong sense of community, understanding that the geocaching wouldn't be what it is without the people who play the game. He recognized early on that organizing Alaskan geocachers would have the dual benefit of strengthening the geocaching community and establishing credibility with local Land Managers. With this in mind, NorthWes collaborated with a few other Alaskan cachers and hosted the [CALLING ALL ALASKA CACHERS!](#) (GCQ2NN) Event in August 2005, which was the first of many meetings that eventually led to the incorporation of [GeocacheAlaska! Inc.](#), the statewide non-profit organization

for all Alaskan geocachers. Since its incorporation, NorthWes has served on the GeocacheAlaska! Board of Directors as a Member at Large, Secretary, and will begin his second term as President in January, 2014. During these years of service, NorthWes had a direct hand in the organization growing to over three hundred members representing most regions in Alaska and several other states and countries and hosting more than 130 events since March 2009.

In addition to being an administrator, NorthWes likes to have fun! He hosted the [Anchorage Holiday GeoFest '05](#) (GCRE1B) which has become an annual tradition, most recently as the [9th Annual Geofest](#) (GC4R64Q). NorthWes also regularly hosts an Alaskan version of the World Wide Flash Mob (most recently, [WWFM X - Top of the World - Ice Planet Hoth](#) , GC49824, at N71°) and the Geocaching Anniversary Event ([Geocaching's Anniversary Meet'n'Mingle](#), GC4A6TN). He also shares his eclectic tastes, serving up spam and pipeapple kabobs at [Post - Apocalyptic Hibernial Solstice Gathering](#) (GC426MJ) in subzero weather. NorthWes owns a pair of poodles who have tagged along during placement of dog-themed caches such as [The dog did it!](#) (GCPE1F), [Skijor!](#) (GCRQGT) and [SPOO Power Walk](#) (GC3K2DR). In addition, NorthWes rolls out the welcome mat for visiting geocachers, hosting events under either his own account ([Great Alaska Cache N'Dash Meet'N'Greet Dinner](#) (GCQJHV), [Spring Meet'N'Greet Dinner with MaxB & Friends](#) (GC11XHQ) and [GeoCruiser Meet'n'Greet](#) (GC4E3CQ)) or collaborating with GeocacheAlaska!

NorthWes also understands geocaching cannot be played without the support of local Land Managers. As a result, he fostered a relationship with the Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department to allow caching on local parklands without a permit. In the "give back" spirit, he organized and hosted Alaska's first CITO Event, [Kincaid Park CITO Event](#) (GCN506), and has two other CITO Events under his account and many others under the [GeocacheAlaska!](#) account. NorthWes has also fostered relationships with the Alaska State Park rangers, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) rangers, National Forest rangers, State of Alaska Fish and Wildlife Refuge managers, and United States Fish and Wildlife administrators. Ongoing collaboration with these Land Managers is evidenced by ongoing growth of geocaching on Alaskan public lands and publically demonstrated by hosting Geocaching Events during National Trails Day and on other occasions (most recently, [Celebrate Caching at BLM's Campbell Tract!](#) (GC4NB3B)).

Finally, NorthWes philosophically believes in education, whether it be cache hiding, trackables, GSAK, and caching ethics FUNDamentals. He hosted Alaska's inaugural "Introduction to Geocaching" events including [Introduction to Geocaching](#) (GCV0W5) and [Back To School Intro to Geocaching](#) (GCXQDR). Most recently, NorthWes organized a presentation to a University of Alaska technology student chapter at [IndieInfoTech Exchange](#) (GC47NVC) and he has presented several topics at GeocacheAlaska!'s monthly EduVents.

Events

2013 Fairbanks Holiday Bash

By Joanne Langseth / Poodle Chic

The 2013 Holiday Bash came off without a hitch.....

Now that's not exactly the truth since Poodle Chic had to be pulled out of the ditch!

It wasn't her fault as she was traveling with 12 wayward Holiday elves... She managed to contain the Grinch but I had no idea what she was into when she agreed to rehabilitate, 12 "Wanna Be" Elf's on the Shelf.

They failed at the job last year and Santa asked if she would lend a hand....

And...Poodle Chic said:

Never the less;

it couldn't be that hard I guessed

a simple task, who would say no when Santa asks...

With 29 in attendance, we all enjoyed pizza, presents, and fun and games was on the main menu.

The Holiday Bash Was a Smash!

We all enjoyed good friendship. Excellent Geocaching stories met a few new folks and shared in the fun of a good old fashion Chinese gift exchange. The Elves mingled in search of their new homes..... Poodle Chic told the stories behind each little red elf, She called them by Name...



Now Frost, Cookie, Sven and Buddy...Over here; Sparkle, Holly, Snowflake and Trixie... Pay attention you naughty little Pixies Hum who am I missing? Icie, Tippy, Peppermint, and Jungle There you are! It's time for some holiday swinging!

Yes, they love to Zip-line through the house, Ride rodeo while chasing the cat on the back of a mouse. Write with lipstick on the mirror. They little guys don't fight fair, and you're sure to find out when they hide marshmallows in your chair! They may look sweet and cute but mischievous they are in their red suit! It was sure a task but rehabilitation homes were found when asked!

Thank you Geocache Alaska for your support and sponsorship of our annual holiday event! The Pizza and Geo Bling was a hit with all in attendance!

A special thank you to Tony "FiremanAk", Laura "MamaNanook" & Jimmy "Onionman" heehee who arrived WAY early... LOL, Oh Yeah they came to help set up.... And called to see if Poodle remembered her Bash.... Giggle. Thank you to Steve of Noreasters and Elaine of Emindle for the cash that tipped our wait staff!

Feel free to join our [Facebook Group](#) to watch the Elves progress.... Each adopted home is responsible for posting pictures on the page making full reports on their little ones progress....Naughty or Nice! Thank you to all and to all a good night!

Events

Earthcaching 10th Anniversary

The Geological Society of America (GSA) recently announced that there are close to 17,600 active EarthCaches around the globe, which have been visited by over 4 million people. An amazing 19,930+ EarthCache Masters Awards have been earned, and 1,340+ EarthCache Discovery Awards have been received. These milestones were reached as the EarthCaching Program approached the tenth anniversary of the first EarthCache placement.



On the 10th of January, 2004, on a headland 3 hours south of Sydney, Australia, the very first EarthCache was 'placed' by Geoaware and his two daughters. [EarthCache I –a simple geology tour of Wasp Head](#)—sat for two weeks before it was found by Tankengine, who became the FTF an EarthCache! On the 10th of January, 2014, GSA will celebrate the [10th Birthday of the EarthCache program](#). EarthCachers around the world are hosting over 70 different events to help GSA celebrate. An interactive map showing of these events, along with more information about the celebration, can be found on the [EarthCache 10th Birthday page](#). Click

on the map icons for details of each event. If you organize an event, or know of an event not already on our map, please let GSA know about it so it can be highlighted online.

GSA also announced their [EarthCache Video Competition 2014](#). Winning entries will be shown at the 3rd International EarthCache Event (3IEE) and other events in late 2014. Come celebrate the 10 Years of EarthCaching through the lens of your video camera! Entries close in July 2014. See the [Earth-Cache Video Competition page](#) for details.



On Saturday, October 11, 2014, GSA and Landsharkz will host the [3rd International EarthCache Event](#) at the world-class facilities of the Cowichan Exhibition Grounds in Duncan, British Columbia, Canada. There's going to be EarthCaching fun for everyone. GSA is building a line-up of awesome guest speakers, EarthCache information galore, geocaching vendors,

an awesome fossil display, food, thousands of nearby geocaches, and a taste of the Cowichan Valley's history and culture and of course... geology! The (tentative) list of local geology presentations includes: Vancouver Island Fossils, Geological History of Western North America, Glaciation - The Shape of the Land, Our place in the 'Ring of Fire', and the Cultural History of the Geology of the Region. Online registration is scheduled to open in early 2014. Don't forget to log your "Will Attend" on the [event page](#).

Finally, GSA is conducting an [EarthCache Survey](#) about EarthCachers and EarthCaching. The survey is part of a study to learn more about who participates in EarthCaching, why they participate, and what they learn.

Editor's Note

By Cathy Wilmeth / The_Firefly

Well, here it is, folks. The beginning of the revamped Around the State newsletter. Some things have stayed the same - including notes from the President, Event Reports, Cache Reports, and general Geocache!Alaska membership information. If you've made it this far, you've also seen some of the changes. The biggest of these is the new look - including the landscape orientation of the pages. This will make reading this publication much easier to do on your computer screen or tablet (or even phone!). You should no longer have to navigate up and down, up and down, to view a single page.

Many of the changes are subtle or are behind the scenes, but make for a more streamlined process for producing a quality document. There will be some more obvious - or not so obvious - changes in the coming months. Keep an eye out!

As always, please send me feedback! I appreciate hearing what you like as well as what you don't like. It helps me to build a publication that serves the entire membership. Also, if you have any suggestions for features you'd like to see (or not see), please let me know. Remember ALL members are encouraged to contribute! You do not have to be a Board member or be 'officially' requested to write an article. If you have a photo or story you want to share, send it in!

Send your articles, thoughts, photos, requests, and suggestions to newsletter@geocachealaska.org.

Cache Reports

25 Days of Christmas *By KR-AK; DR-AK; AW-AK; FTL-AK, Abosco13, Ham Hunter & many cache seekers*

'Twas the 25 Days of Christmas Caching in Anchorage Alaska
When all through the town not a cacher was searching, not
even a Cavyguy.

The ammo cans were hung by the chimney with care,
in hopes that an email from Greatland Reviewer soon would
be there.

The cachers were nestled all snug in their beds,
while visions of nanos danced in their heads;
and 3/8ths in her kerchief and 5/8th in his cap,
had just settled their brains for a long winter nap;

When out of my phone arouse such a clatter,
I sprung from my bed to check what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon, on the breast of the new fallen snow,
covering the track of the hider below,
when, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
but a miniature Nitro-CACHER and eight tiny caching
companions,

with a little old driver to lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be Greatland Reviewer.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
and he whistled and shouted and called them by name:

"Now, Kona! Now, Tank! Now, Smokey and Victor!
On, Corky! On, Aero! On Sugar and Ra!
To the top of the hill, to the top of the tree
now, dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
when they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
so up to the treetop, they coursers they flew,
with the Nitro-CACHER full of bison's and Greatland Reviewer,
too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the path
the prancing and running of each little paw.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
down the trail Greatland Reviewer came with a bound.

He was dressed all in ski gear from his head to his foot,
and his clothes were all tarnished with leaves and twigs,
a bundle of decon kits he had flung on his back,
and he looked like a cacher just opening his pack.

His eyes-how they tinkled! His dimples-how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry.
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
and the scruff on his chin was as white as the snow.

The top of a nano he held tight in his teeth,
and the log it encircled his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face and a round little belly
that shook when he laughed like a bowlful of jelly.

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old cacher,
and I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
filling all the ammo cans; then turning with a jerk,
and laying his finger aside of his nose,
and giving a nod, up the trail he went.

He leapt into the Nitro -CACHER, to his team gave a whistle,
and away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,
Happy Caching to all, and to all a Good Find!

Welcome to the final cache of the 25 days of Christmas.
When you qualify just go to the GZ listed. At the GZ you will
need to make a choice, are you Naughty or Nice? If you are
Naughty then you will need to sign the log book in the RED
ammo can. If you are Nice then you fill out the log book in the
GREEN ammo can. Then as you are logging the cache online
please post if you logged the Naughty logbook or the Nice log
book. Each ammo can has been loaded with gifts, please take
one of the Geo Gifts and enjoy. We ask that if you have en-
joyed this series to please donate a gift into one of the ammo
cans so that we can try to enjoy the Geo Gift giving through
out the year.

RCWard...Found it

Oh FTF, Oh FTF,
I'm glad we get to claim this FTF!

fuzzybelly...Didn't find it

Looks like I got a nice big coal frowny face.

bobdriveak...Found it

After a long day that extended into the night, I
needed to go caching.

cavyguy...Found it

FTF!!! WooHoo and a Ho Ho Ho!!! What a way
to start the day on a brisk morning!!!

markandkimb...Didn't find it

It seemed like the folks at the coffee hut were
giving me the evil eye...

finnyboy...Found it

My first FTF! Nobody has ever found this cache
before... cool! With Leftfootlarry.

akfuzzydice...Found it

FTF!!!!!! Been a loooooong time since I got
an FTF.

Cache Reports

More 25 Days of Christmas

[burtonsinak...Didn't find it](#)

All I want for Christmas
Is my GPS
My GPS
Just my GPS
Gee, if I could only have
My GPS
Then I could find this cache!

It seems so long since I could say,
"Found it"
Gosh, oh gee
How happy I'd be
If I could only "Go caching"
All I want for Christmas
Is GPS
My GPS
Just my GPS
Gee, if I could only have my GPS
Then I could wish you Merry Christmas

All I want for Christmas
Is my GPS
My GPS
Just my GPS
Gee, if I could only have my GPS

Greatland reviewer and the CO
Used to hide lots of swag and containers
But now when I try to find new caches
coming out
None can be found.

All I want for Christmas
Is my GPS
My GPS
Just my GPS
Gee, if I could only have my GPS
Then I could say found it
Then I could say cache on
Then I could wish you Merry Christmas

[NorthWes...Found it](#)

There it was - hung with care - like a gift stocking! As my hands opened the container, what did I see? Three names on the log signed in ahead of me! Hmmm... yes - the usual suspects I'd expect to see, out caching in the snow from tree to tree.

[sladog...Found it](#)

I know now why I didn't find this the first time: the evil snow blanket.

[coloReido...wants to find it](#)

I am adding this to my list; won't need to check it twice, because I know I will want to complete this series when I get back. Great job on the very entertaining cache description!!

[Fred and Izzy...Found it](#)

Ultimately found it in a spot where I subconsciously thought, "that'd be a great place... nah..."

[jackcat14...Found it](#)

WHOOOOPI, FTF (Fifth To Find).

Czech Caching

by Michael Malvick / Ladybug Kids



During a recent caching trip to the Las Vegas area, I attended an event with an international crowd of cachers including Slovakian cachers [lgi](#) and his son [bilakmato](#). During the course of a conversation with them, I mentioned an upcoming business trip to Europe and that I was debating whether to spend some down time in the Bavarian area of Germany or perhaps visit Prague, Czech Republic,

since I'd heard it was a beautiful city and other than East Berlin prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, I'd never visited an Eastern European country. Igi and Martin lit right up and encouraged me to visit Prague because Martin is studying film-making at the university and he could serve as a local caching and culinary guide. A quick check with my travel agent confirmed it was actually cheaper to fly to Prague from Anchorage than to Munich, so I booked my flight and started researching Prague's most favorited caches and "must see" sites.

Downloading pocket queries and sifting through the caches revealed that Prague is a hotbed of quality caching, with dozens of hides with more than one hundred favorite points and several having been logged more than 10,000 times (imagine trying to keep a fresh log book in those caches!). With only two full days in Prague, I selected a dozen specific caches to target based on favorite points and proximity to other points of interest, knowing I'd be finding other caches along the way.

My flights from Anchorage to Minneapolis to Amsterdam to Prague were uneventful and I slept fairly well, so I was ready to hit the ground running, er, caching, when I landed at 0900 local time after traveling for seventeen hours. Martin met me at the airport to ease my transition into Prague's public transportation system and



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after I validated my two-day public transit pass, quick bus and metro rides brought us to Old Town Square where a short walk led to my hotel. I dropped off my luggage and Martin and I returned to the Old Town Square, stopping to grab my first Czech cache, [Stavovske divadlo / The Estates Theatre](#), where operas, dramas, and concerts have been performed for more than two hundred years. As with many of the local caches, the cache page is written in Czech and English (and sometimes German and French) and provided historical background for the location, which made for a truly rich urban micro caching experience.

Our next stop was [Prague, Staroměstské náměstí](#), a virtual cache and waymark “two-fer,” featuring the meridian Prague’s land surveys are based upon. Nearby is a large astronomical clock which chimes on the hour and features a window that opens for the twelve apostles to march past



and a skeleton representing Death, striking the time. After cheating Death (at least temporarily), Martin and I wandered over to the 650 year old Charles Bridge and the [Cache my Czech \(Prague\)](#) virtual cache. The bridge was teaming with tourists and street artists and musicians, even though the weather was foggy and about 35° F. I found the well-polished dog on one of the statues, waited in line to snap the required selfie, and then we continued on to the [Lennon Wall](#) and [Nejuzsi ulicka v Praze/Prague narrowest street](#) where the term “street” is used loosely since no car could ever drive down it and even most motorcycles would be challenged to negotiate the stairs. Nonetheless, it was challenging to hunt the cache with the constant stream of muggles flowing past to see the local novelty, until I realized from the hint that the cache was actually in the greenbelt across the street (urban caching in Europe is especially tough

with tall buildings shielding the satellites from relatively narrow streets). Later in the day, we stopped by [Jan Mydlar](#), a simple cache near the Prague Museum of Science and Industry, but with a cache page that



provides some insight to the darker side of 16th century Prague and the life of an executioner. Moving on through Old Prague, Martin and I visited [Rotunda sv. Krize Mensiho](#), an interesting church built with a round profile. The cache hide itself was very nicely done, camouflaged to look like any one of millions of similar objects we walked over throughout the day (cobblestones).



Our walking tour then took us to the Vltava River, which spends nineteen of its 270 miles winding through Prague and supplying its drinking water before flowing south through the Czech Republic and joining the Elbe River. Local cachers established a series of caches covering the bridges that span the river and the river’s islands and Martin and I visited [United Islands of Prague No.6](#) and [Prague bridges 11 - Jiraskuv most](#) along with several others of the series. As with most of the other caches we found, the hides were straightforward due to the urban setting, but the Cache Owners went to great lengths on their cache pages to provide historical

and social perspectives of the location enhanced with photographs, making the find secondary to all the terrific information so generously shared.

Another terrific batch of caches is the “Prazske legendy” (Prague Legends) series. Visiting [Prazske legendy - O stribrne rybe](#), [Prazske legendy - O Lokytkovi](#), [Prazske legendy - O zkamenelem ulicnikovi](#), and [Prazske legendy - O kostlivci s hrebem v hlave](#), introduced me to historical accounts and legends about the owner of a condemned house being saved by finding a solid

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silver fish hidden in one of the walls a few hundred years earlier, a dishonest keeper of a measurement standard (not all cubits are created equal), a petrified urchin atop a church (named for Martin's patron saint), and a young toolmaking apprentice who conspired with an unfaithful wife to murder her husband, only to have their crime revealed seven years later when the body was exhumed.

Taking a break from caching, I attended a string quintet performance in Suk Hall of the [Rudolfinum](#), home to Prague's Philharmonic Orchestra, while Martin attended a student [TED talk](#) at the University. I bought a tenth-row seat for \$40 and spent ninety minutes

entranced by world class musicians clearly enjoying their program of Pachelbel, Mozart, Beethoven, Dvořák and others. Neither I nor the audience would let the quintet end the night without an encore and the musicians humored us with a whimsical rendition of Anderson's "Plink, Plank, Plunk."



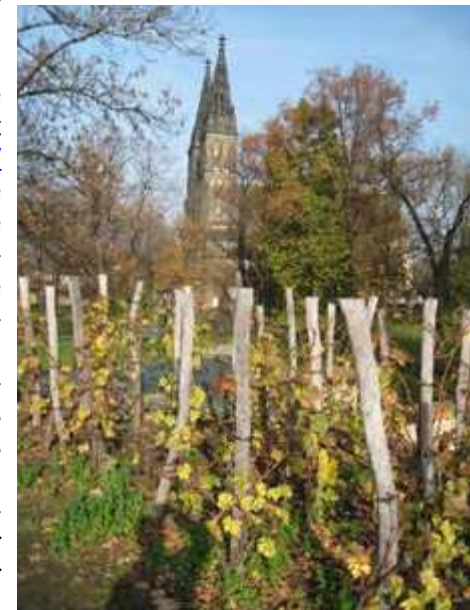
The concert let out before the TED talk, so I solo cached around Prague, completing an urban EarthCache ([The Letna Profile / Letensky profil](#)) and finding a few others before calling it a night.

The next morning, I returned to the Old Town Square to take care of some Christmas shopping, after a hearty breakfast at the bakery across the street from my hotel. Being attracted to shiny things of beauty, I spent a fair amount of time selecting a set of Bohemian stemware with help from the shopkeeper who

spoke impeccable English. She also helped me select locally made items for the junior ladybugs.

At about the time I was finished shopping, Martin was ready to hit the pavement again and we took the metro south to [Jedlickuv ustav a skoly](#) (Jedlicka Institute and Schools), established in 1913 to provide educational opportunities to children with physical disabilities and [Vysehrad](#), a 900 year old castle with a commanding view of Prague and the Vltava River. It was a lot of fun to peek through the portals of the castle walls and imagine the defensive positions that could be taken to repel invaders. A quick tram ride put us within easy walking distance of the [Smallest House of Prague](#), which has had many uses including a brothel, an artist's studio, and a private residence.

From there, Martin and I crossed the river and headed up the hill to visit [Pavilion 1891](#) and [Kralovsky letohradek/ The Royal Summer Palace](#). The cache at the Pavilion was a very well done bird house one had to access by climbing on top of a low wall within view of the Pavilion's overlook. Martin played monkey while I kept muggle watch, but with the exception of a woman picking flowers from the lawn, everyone else was entranced by the view of Prague across the river. At the Summer Palace, Martin and I came upon a father with two children who were focused more on their smart phone than actually looking for



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the cache and I ended up making the find for both groups. After a brief conversation about the foibles and virtues of a dedicated GPS versus a smart phone, I gave the youngsters a set of 2013 Alaskan pathtags and we continued on to [Plynove lampy - Gaslamps](#) to visit the Prague Castle and St. Vitus Cathedral. The castle has hosted the kings of Bohemia, Holy Roman emperors, and presidents of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic during its 1100 year old history. Today, the Czech crown jewels are housed in a hidden room. The cathedral was founded shortly after the castle and was expanded several times to its current appearance that includes a main tower more than three hundred feet tall. I've grown accustomed to historic tourist attractions such as this having cafes, but was taken by complete surprise when I saw that Starbucks now refreshed the masses. That incongruous sighting heightened my awareness for other American cultural manifestations that have crept into ancient European sites and I had a good time photographing Starbucks, Subway, McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken and other institutions that didn't seem like they belonged.

On our way down the hill from the castle, Martin and I stopped by [DUM U OSLA V KOLEBCE](#), which is hidden inside a fake lamp hung outside the Alchemy Museum. We easily located the cache, but extracting it and return-



ing it proved to be a challenge as groups of tourists kept stopping to read the museum's sign board below the lamp. We persevered and ultimately properly earned our smiley. A little further down the street we passed the heavily guarded American Embassy.

Eventually, Martin and I got hungry, and, using a geocache as a guide ([Novomestsky pivovar](#)), we found a microbrewery with top notch Pilsner beer and terrific food. Martin ordered a dish with featuring pork and I enjoyed Bohemian goulash with bread dumplings. After our repast, the waiter invited us to go downstairs to view the brew house with its copper kettles and open fermentation tanks. Also of interest on this level were the antique craftsman implements hanging on the walls. The overall experience brought a memorable close to my all too short visit to Prague and visit with Martin and established the city as a place to return to in the future. Martin guided me back to my hotel, we bid each other farewell, and I climbed the stairs to my room a final time to pack for the train ride to Munich the next morning.

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!

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1. Navigate to the [GeocacheAlaska! webpage](http://www.geocachealaska.org) 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](http://www.geocachealaska.org) and click on "Add to Cart" to purchase an annual membership that will run through December 31, 2013.
3. Navigate to the [GeocacheAlaska! webpage](http://www.geocachealaska.org) 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.

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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 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. 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 newsletter@geocachealaska.org Subject: Around the State.