

The Georgia Geocachers Association (GGA) emails this notice once a month as a way to keep the membership informed of the events taking place each month. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, reply to this message with "UNSUBSCRIBE" in the subject line.

In This Issue:

- November Event Roundup – 7 Great Events
- Caching Etiquette Guide – Part Four of a Series - Final
- GGA Meeting Notes – October 2007

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November Event Roundup

November 2007 GGA Meeting

Saturday November 10, 2007 2:00p – 4:00p
Come one down for the annual meeting in Savannah. Meet new cachers, see old ones. Have a great time at on the Georgia coast!

http://www.geocaching.com/seek/cache_details.aspx?guid=2adf98f5-ebc1-493c-905b-677050790631

Watch North Ga. Cachers Stuff Their Faces #2

Saturday November 10, 2007 6:00p – 8:30p
This event is for meeting and greeting fellow cachers of the North Georgia (Apple Country). Come on out meet and talk with others cachers. Everyone is welcome, bring you friends and kinfolks.

http://www.geocaching.com/seek/cache_details.aspx?guid=d5bbf4a6-b35c-4b97-9fe7-e4243ed83c7b

WWFM - Macon

Saturday November 10, 2007 12:00p (Noon)
This event is being held in conjunction with dozens of other World Wide Flash Mob (WWFM) events that will be held simultaneously around the world. Come be a part of a worldwide caching event, with potentially thousands of participants!

http://www.geocaching.com/seek/cache_details.aspx?guid=45727ce7-b86b-4d2e-8225-01dc479cd567

WWFM – Savannah Smiles

Saturday November 10, 2007 12:00p (Noon)
This event is being held in conjunction with dozens of other World Wide Flash Mob (WWFM) events that will be held simultaneously around the world. Come be a part of a worldwide caching event, with potentially thousands of participants! Come grab a quick fun smilie before the GGA meeting! Then tour the beautiful Savannah historic areas in the downtown area.

http://www.geocaching.com/seek/cache_details.aspx?guid=9b018888-343d-4a38-84f1-da93d2c953ef

WWFM - Atlanta (World Wide Flash Mob)

Saturday November 10, 2007 12:00p (Noon)
This event is being held in conjunction with dozens of other World Wide Flash Mob (WWFM) events that will be held simultaneously around the world. Come be a part of a worldwide caching event, with potentially thousands of participants!

http://www.geocaching.com/seek/cache_details.aspx?guid=87e24a31-b047-4d14-ad94-d2c010e1fb93

WWFM - Columbus

Saturday November 10, 2007 12:00p (Noon)

This event is being held in conjunction with dozens of other World Wide Flash Mob (WWFM) events that will be held simultaneously around the world. Come be a part of a worldwide caching event, with potentially thousands of participants!

http://www.geocaching.com/seek/cache_details.aspx?guid=6818309d-8221-47e2-927c-e669c7bf919b

CVC Meet, Greet and Eat! (Buffet Style)

Sunday November 11, 2007 1:00p

The Chattahoochee Valley Cachers have had many new members join in the last few months. We would like to meet all of you! Meet some new (and old) cachers. Eat from a variety of Chinese and American selections on the buffet. Exchange travel bugs and coins.

http://www.geocaching.com/seek/cache_details.aspx?guid=060abe28-80e1-43b7-84f9-78035dd47c03

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: Over the next several newsletters we will be publishing excerpts from the Caching Etiquette Guide written by Cymbaline. The entire article is available for viewing on the GGA Forums.

Caching Etiquette Guide

by Cymbaline

Putting it All Together: Going Caching!

Now let's put everything together. So far, we've covered general things to keep in mind when hiding and hunting a cache, as well as the types of things you might find in them. This section will integrate some of those points already discussed with some general recommendations on proper etiquette when "out caching." Remember that in the introduction I said that "there are no rules in caching," so think of these as guidelines for you to consider. Ideally you will find yourself enjoying the caching experience more and may even find yourself appreciating your fellow cachers even more. "Going caching" in this context is implied as "going to find a cache." However, it can also mean "going to place a cache." So, before we get started with finding one, let me add a few additional things about hiding a cache in addition to those listed previously.

Cache Hiding

First, make sure you check and read any guidelines that have been established by your cache listing host (geocaching/terracing/navicaching/etc dot com) and abide by them. For example, most of them have restrictions on what can or can't be placed into caches, usually for good reason. Generally, items such as knives, lighters and food of any sort shouldn't be placed in caches. Kids and knives occasionally don't mix well, and lighters can unfortunately lead to a conflagration temptation. Wild animals are really determined individuals, and the larger ones WILL get into that container for the mints or MREs or can of pasta, be the container metal or plastic or otherwise. (Titanium boxes might work, but my pocketbook doesn't allow for them.) Second, make sure you place your cache so that you can perform timely maintenance on it (or have someone available to do it for you.) Poorly maintained caches can and do reflect badly on the caching community as a whole in some situations. Take it as a given that your cache will leak, take on water, get run over by a wildebeests, or even stolen. It's to be expected, and nobody will hang your shorts from the flagpole for it. At least, the first one or two finders won't; the third or fourth one may ask for it to be archived or removed or start posting not-so-polite logs. Keep abreast of the problems and resolve them as soon as possible.

Third, once you have placed the cache, do your best to take the most accurate coordinates possible. This may involve marking a set, walking away, coming back again and mark another set, etc. Or, if your GPS supports it, take a waypoint average. Rinse. Repeat. There's nothing more frustrating to a future hunter than to discover that they were 100-200ft away from where they were supposed to be. It's also good practice to shoot a set of coordinates when you come on your maintenance visits and compare them to the originals. It's not uncommon to get completely different results at different times of day, as well as different times of year (tree cover is mostly to blame for this). If they are markedly different (say, more than 20ft), you might want to fine-tune your posted coordinates. As long as the rest of us hunters can find it and non-cachers don't, then you've successfully hidden the cache! (Note: It's possible you're a really evil hider. We all know one or two. Someone will find it eventually. Maybe. Darn it!)

“I found it!”

Ah, the battle cry of the happy cache hunter, either to his/herself if alone or maybe out loud if in a group. You've gone looking for it, and you've found it. Previously, I've discussed some things to keep in mind once you have found the cache. It's time to repeat some of those, as well as going into additional detail.

Inspection

Once you find the cache, give it a look over when you're opening it – this is assuming you have made a mental note how it was placed first. Look for any cracks, leaks, bad seals or any other damage. Normal weathering is ok, gaping holes are not. If you notice something serious, email the cache owner when you get back or at least mention it in your online log. The same goes for the contents – take wet decomposing contents with you to help staunch further mold growth and email the owner. If the cache is in such seriously bad shape that it's devolved into being trash, then go ahead and take it with you... and contact the cache owner as soon as possible (seeing a theme here?).

Logging

Now it's time to leave your mark in the cache log. Some finders use preprinted stickers to affix to a log page in lieu of signing their name. That's fine, but make sure your sticker fits the page and doesn't require an 8"x11" sheet of paper. (Cachers after you will grumble if they don't have a place to sign the log.) If you decide to trade items (see below) or travel bugs, it's nice to jot a note about what you've traded, too. If the cache inspired you, or the walk to the cache was a pleasant one, feel free to make those comments as well. It used to be very common for on-site logs to read more like a never-ending journal written by multiple people. Sadly, it seems this practice has mostly fallen by the wayside (personally, I blame microcaches) but as it's not a requirement, it's completely up to you to decide what to write.

At a minimum, take the time to scratch out the date and your name - “name” in this case, being whatever you choose to use; real name, moniker, handle, caching nickname, etc.

Trading

Trading is completely optional. The guidelines here are pretty simple: If you take something, leave something of equal or increased value. “Value” in this case does not intrinsically mean “money worth.” Nor does “quantity” make up for “quality.” Here are some good and bad examples:

Good: You really want that dollar-store compass because you lost yours after falling into a stump hole on the way to the cache. You choose to leave your dollar-store caribiner (or one of your real nice \$25 load-bearing climbing 'biners). In it's place. Either is perfectly acceptable.

Bad: Leaving a couple of dollar bills – or, worse, a McDonald's happy meal toy – for that really nice Suunto digital compass. That's just wrong, and you're asking for bad karma.

Good: That small plastic flashlight might come in handy, even if it doesn't have batteries right now. In it's place you leave a little handmade something that only cost you 50 cents in materials, yet took you a half an hour to make. That's a different kind of value, and is fine.

Bad: “Wow! That Surefire mini-light is awesome! I must have it! In it's place, I'll leave this tennis ball I found on my way to the cache, and this five-pack of travel band-aids, and.. oh! I've got a couple partially used double-A batteries too! To top it off, I'll also leave a dollar! That's a 5-for-1 trade right there!” Wrong. Very wrong. That Surefire is a \$50-100 item. In many contexts, many people would consider that “stealing” as opposed to “trading.”

Good: You don't see anything that strikes your fancy, but you decide to leave something anyway as the trade items might be a bit wanting. Perhaps it's because too many “bad” trades happened before you got there. Nonetheless, leaving a small, nice little something is good.

Bad: “There's lots of good stuff here, but I didn't bring anything with me to trade. I'm sure no one would really mind, and it won't be missed, so I'll just take this small thing here that caught my eye and not leave anything.” Obviously, this person has no concept of the definition of “trade”, or has chosen to ignore the definition of “steal.” A cache is not your personal resupply drop.

Good: Taking the cheap McToy-like item and leaving something of “value”.

Bad: Taking something of value and leaving a cheap McToy-like item. Oh, it's “for the kids?” That's weird; most kids I've seen at caches *skip* the BurgerToy's and take something else. Unless it's Spiderman-related. Fear Spidey!

To parents: If your kid wants to leave his McToy in exchange for “something better,” perhaps that should be telling you something. Bring other items for your child to leave.

To non-parents: McMeal toys are not good trade items and why are you buying Happy Burgers to begin with?)

Again, these are just examples and not all-encompassing, but ideally the concept is in place: at a minimum, trade even and fair, and if possible, leave the cache contents a little better than when you arrived. You would want the same of your own cache, right?

Replacing

Pack up the cache and make sure the container is properly sealed. Since you made a mental note before hand on how it was hidden, replacing it should be pretty simple: put it back exactly (or as close as humanly possible) as you found it. Once done, take a few steps away and survey the area. If you notice any obvious or semi-obvious telltale signs of your activities, take the time to repair them. For instance, if it's a cache in the woods, and you notice a flattened or barren area where you were sitting, take the time to “naturalize” the area so the cache location is not as obvious. Find a nearby branch/stick and “rake” the area to cover any barren spots where you were sitting. If available, take some natural cover from further away and sprinkle thing around to make it look more, well, natural. Another example would be for urban caches. Make sure you aren't being observed replacing the cache. If it has some sort of blending camouflage, make sure it's properly reattached or reattached to hide it. Again, take a few steps away and eyeball the hiding spot. Can you see the container? Are you supposed to be able to see it? If so, fine, but if not go back and adjust it as needed. Another common “mistake” that we are all guilty of in regards to finding caches in the woods is “using the social trail” to get to the cache. This is human nature and often can't be helped. If possible, try to leave the cache area in a different direction than you arrived to help lessen the impact. Congratulations! You've successfully found and replaced the cache! Time to move on to the next one.

Leave No Trace / Cache In-Trash Out

One final comment and ideal to keep in mind while hunting for a cache is “Leave No Trace.” While applicable to replacing the cache and making it just as fun to find for the finders that come after you, it's primary focus is to “leave the area better than you found it.” If there's trash around, put on your civic-minded hat and carry it out (or as much as possible.) Go *around* the pretty flower/plant patch in the woods as opposed to tromping through it and damaging the foliage. If nature calls and the call *must* be answered, give some thought to how and where you answer. (Not in the stream, away from others, not on plants, bury your waste, etc.) If you can walk ten steps away, turn around, and it's quite obvious where you've been, then you need to rethink your technique as well as repair your damage.

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October 2007 GGA Meeting Notes

In place of our regular monthly meeting, in October the GGA held it's annual “GGA Challenge Event”. The event was held October 13th at the Dauset Trails Nature Center near Jackson, Georgia. The 13th proved to be a lucky day for many of the participants, but before describing the event we need to acknowledge and thank those who made it all possible.

First: Ike English, of the Dauset Trails Nature Center for allowing us to use the facility. Ike could not join us that day, but we're sure he would have enjoyed seeing families experience the facility not only for the GGA Challenge, but also for the many amenities available there. This is not the first time we've had our Challenge Event at Dauset Trails, and hopefully it won't be the last. Thanks Ike!

Second: Ed “Rebel” Handler for coordinating with Ike to use the facility, orchestrating much of the behind the scenes work, and acting as our Master of Ceremonies.

Third: We had two committees, or “Teams”, who did all the work before, during, and after the event to ensure that a good time was had by all the 81 participants on that beautiful day.

Support Team:

The most visible element of the support team’s activities was the great lunch they provided, but they also made geocoins and t-shirts available for purchase, handled the registration of the challenge participants, loaded coords into their GPS receivers, and checked in those returning from their cache hunts. There are no doubt other critical behind the scenes jobs these folks did, but since they did them so well nothing was lacking to be noticed. (Well... there was one problem experienced by those using the restrooms and not aware that the lights were on timers set by the person who preceded them. But we really can’t blame the support team for leaving us in the dark with our pants down, can we?)

The team was ably lead by the pair of ParentsofSAM, and supported by Mertat, Professor Shorthair, Joebids, CharmedOne3, and mtn.man. Thanks to you all!

Hiding Team (that’s a polite term for this group):

These are the fine (?) folks who created and hid the cache containers, some of which the rest of us were actually able to find. The team was ably led by Rebel, who coordinated which hider would hide his caches in which particular area, provided maps of the area, and generally made sure we all had sufficient time to find seven caches without a minute to spare. The other evil hiders in the group were Jason (of ParentsofSAM), Tarvol, Phat.bak, Papageorgia, Maviman, and Goober6565. We won’t single out any particular hider (oink, oink) as they all did a great job of showcasing their art. There wasn’t a lame skirt lifter among them. Well, there was one skirt lifter, but that was provided by the support team and hidden in the pavilion, so it doesn’t count unless you were the little boy who kept returning to it for another candy.

There were 67 existing GGA members signing in under 57 geonicks, and 7 new members signing in under 4 geonicks. There were a total of 81 participants counted, so some of the old GGA members were apparently too senile to remember to check their name off the list. Individual members, or teams sharing a GPS, comprised the 49 teams that left after lunch on a shotgun start to spend up to three hours looking for the caches they had drawn at random. The caches contained sealed envelopes with individual playing cards. The object was to find up to seven caches, then make the best possible poker hand with five of the seven cards. Some people went out on their own, some joined up into small teams and found more than their seven so they’d have help from someone else who did likewise.

The cache hunt, as well as the events before and after the hunt, was filmed by a crew from Georgia Public Television for the “Georgia Outdoors” program. They apparently had a tough time keeping up with Bushbob and his family as they reportedly bailed out after the first few finds to return to the pavilion. They should have gotten some great footage though.

The intrepid cache hunters returned by 4pm to have their envelopes opened and checked off. This was followed by a game of “who has the highest hand.”

Player number 44 had four “4”s, and JMTBuzz’s four of a kind was the winning hand. His prize was a Garmin eTrex Legend HCx. Then there was a flush or a straight, a couple of full houses, three of a kinds, and on down. Even many with only one “high card” got a prize, thanks to the many goodies contributed by members to supplementing those purchased by the GGA from funds collected throughout the year.

Even those who didn’t win a prize earned a “smilie” for attending, and had a great time.

You can read the logs of those who attended, and see the gallery of pictures at this link:

http://www.geocaching.com/seek/cache_details.aspx?guid=...ab-bfb2-acac3920bc54

(note: you’ll need to be logged into geocaching.com to view the page after it is archived)

If you missed this event you missed a great one, and we hope you can join us at our November event. In addition to an annual challenge event, our annual Savannah GGA Meeting has become somewhat of a tradition. That event will be held November 10th, and we hope you’ll make the trip. Savannah has much to offer, and many Atlanta area geocachers are making plans to spend the night to make the most of their visit.

See you there!

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