You Gotta Be Kidding Me!
Our search for ever more creative cache containers.

Caching on School Grounds

Geocaching 101
A teacher introduces her students to geocaching.

Plus:
- San Antonio Geocaching Awards
- Benchmarks
- Cachers Up Close
- Cache Conundrums

PREMIER ISSUE
Leave Your Mark With
Custom Pathtags

A PATHTAG is a single-sided custom metal tag about the size and weight of a U.S. Quarter or a one Euro coin. Pathtags are generally used as personal "signature items" for Geocaching. If found, simply log it and the tag's profile will display for you to view. Unless the profile says otherwise, you are welcome to add it into your permanent collection.

Pathtags are really easy to design and many owners design their own tags. The reverse side of the tag is home for your tag's unique serial number. This serial number allows you to enjoy the features of the accompanying online Community. The Pathtags Community is free to access by anyone who finds your tag.

For more information, or to order your custom pathtags, visit:
www.pathtags.com
Thank you for subscribing to FTF Geocacher!

Like many of you, we were amazed to find there were no magazines devoted to the great sport of geocaching! We hope to fill this void by publishing a bimonthly journal of all things cache-related.

Within these pages, we aspire to capture the thrill of the hunt and the satisfaction of logging a find. We will provide a forum for cachers to share their stories of the adventure and camaraderie unique to the sport of geocaching.

Please help spread word of FTF Geocacher. Our success depends on expanding our readership and attracting advertisers.

If you are interested in placing an ad within these pages, act now to get in on the ground floor while we are still hungry for new advertisers and rates are rock bottom!

We hope you enjoy our premier issue and look forward to your feedback and suggestions to improve the magazine.

Happy Caching
Keith Petrus (ckpetrus)

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FTF Geocacher
The Magazine for Geocachers

FTF Geocacher is published bimonthly (6 issues per year) by Icon Creative Services

We are currently offering Trial Subscriptions only. Visit our website at www.ftfgeocacher.com to view subscription options.

Email: info@ftfgeocacher.com
Web: www.ftfgeocacher.com

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Feedback

We asked subscribers for ideas for the magazine.

“I would suggest creating a database of photographer cachers and shotgun emailing them (us) potential themes and assignments for competition. This would make for a great regular section in your magazine - a user submitted photo contest with a new theme each month.”

- wvangler -
MOGA 2010
April 9-11, 2010
Indian Creek Recreation Area
Mark Twain Lake, Missouri, USA

MOGA (Midwest Open Geocaching Adventure) 2010 is going to be the largest and busiest yet. The US Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis Area Geocachers Association, L Frank and Denmother, and the rest of the Moga Staff want to prepare you for a fun packed weekend like no other.

SPACE is going to be our theme this year and we have plenty of it. Last year we had almost 600 registered attendees and we are expecting even more this year.

We are returning to the Indian Creek Recreation Area (The site of MOGA 2007) with 100 new caches. This is not to mention the new park-n-grabs we are planning, and over 160 permanent caches from previous MOGA events. All of these new caches will be released sometime after Easter so you can come out and enjoy caching early.

ASP GeoBash V
May 21-23, 2010
Allegany State Park
Salamanca, New York, USA

Come celebrate the Fifth Annual ASP GeoBash in the scenic Red House section of Allegany State Park. The event this year will be held at Camp Allegany, Just off Rt ASP2.

You can plan on a FREE, fun, family-oriented gathering that will include activities for geocachers of all ages. The three-day event will offer everything from games, drawings, and educational seminars to lots of caches of all types and terrain.

The park offers campgrounds, (cabins and cottages) or accommodations are available in two nearby towns, Salamanca, NY or Bradford, PA, so you can make plans to stay the weekend or longer.
Forum Readers Express Doubts About Offline Geocaching Magazine

We posted requests for feedback on the idea of publishing a magazine devoted to geocachers in a few of the existing online forums and received quite a few helpful and cautionary comments, the gist of which are paraphrased below:

Geocachers are a tech-savvy bunch who prefer reading about caching online. Nobody reads magazines or newspapers any more when you can get all the information you need from the internet for free.

Been there, done that, and it didn’t work. Several magazines have tried and failed. You would be better off starting a blog.

The pool of potential subscribers is too small to support a magazine.

Even major magazines and newspapers are struggling to survive in today’s economy.

Geocaching is not that complicated and there is little a magazine could provide that most of us do not already know – or could learn online.

And our favorite response, simply...

No.

But the biggest controversy turned out to be the name we chose for the magazine, FTF Geocacher, which some took quite literally. Here follow our thoughts on the subject:

FTF the Name: In a Groundspeak forum posting way back in 2003 titled “Geocaching Magazine?...,” cacher “Golflhaus” wrote “If you’re looking for a trendy, inside-joke title for the magazine, I’d like to offer ‘FTF’ as a possibility.”

We thought “FTF” sounded appropriately catchy but would mean nothing to someone seeing the magazine for the first time. So, we added the word “Geocacher.” That’s it... the extent of our thought on the subject. Rest assured, the magazine will very definitely not be restricted to any particular aspect of geocaching, FTF hunting or otherwise.

FTF the Subject: My sons and I were out caching over the holidays and a listing popped up just a few miles away. We said “What the heck” and had a really good time going for the FTF together (especially since it was their first). To each his own.

There were also some who seemed to like the idea and offered suggestions...

I believe in order to make this magazine successful, it’s going to need to catch the reader’s attention. It’s going to need to have an even ratio of photos to text. The articles are going to need to be interesting, adventurous! The photos are going to need to be appealing to the eye. You’re going to have to connect to the readers. Split the magazine up into sections; stories and letters, trackables, unique caches, cool places, etc. These are things that I like to see when I pick up a magazine. I like to be engaged. I don’t like my time wasted with poorly written articles and some lame, grainy, black and white photos that fail to capture the moment. Anyway, that’s just me. – Team Idasam

Newbie Tip

Did you know there is a right and a wrong way to replace a log in a typical screw-top bison or nano?

Wrong

When closing containers with interior threads, like this bison-style pill case, the log should be rolled inside the container cap to keep the edges of the log from being mangled by the threading.

Right
Arriving at ground zero, I peered into a rotted out void in a tree and saw... "No Way... is that a giant rubber spider?" The cache brought back memories of the cheesy 1980's Flash Gordon movie in which Flash was forced to reach blindly into one of many knotholes in a large log, hoping to avoid the one occupied by the infamous death-by-stinging creature. In fact, I’ve “flashed” back on the scene many times in the short time I’ve spent geocaching as I’ve been forced to hold my breath while reaching into one dark crevasse after another. But that’s another topic for another story (and a not-so-subtle hint to the writers among you).

Cacher creativity is most often displayed in the naming of a cache, but occasionally it is extended to the design of the cache container itself. In the case of the aforementioned spider cache, it included both as it was cleverly titled “Charlotte’s Cache” by hider DigitalGlen.

While creative caches are lots of fun, they occasionally backfire on...
their owners as they run up against the unyielding laws of physic and whims of mother nature.

Such was the case with one of my own hides. Embedding a string-tied watertight container into a Nerf ball and lobbing it into a 10 foot high void in a tree seemed like a great idea for a cache until it became clear that 1. The void filled with water when it rained, and 2. Nerf balls are basically just big round sponges. Live and learn.

Personally, I love finding an out-of-the-ordinary cache container, and so far I have been pleasantly surprised on many occasions. The creativity of geocachers continues to amaze me.

A knothole geocache? Close... this is actually the stamp portion of a letterbox hybrid.

We plan to devote space in future issues to creative cache containers (published with permission of the owners). Send cache photos to mail@ftfgeocacher.com

Trail Hazards

Ticks

Spend any time at all geocaching and you are sure to come across one of mother nature’s most blood-thirsty creatures.

Misconceptions

The tick is not an insect but rather is a member of the Arachnid family, which includes scorpions and spiders (making them all the creepier). Ticks do not jump or fly, they simply allow themselves to be brushed onto their victims as they walk through high grass or weeds.

Do

Grasp body of tick as closely to your skin as possible and pull straight away.

Do Not

Apply a lit match or alcohol to the tick. This will only increase the risk of reverse transfer of nasty disease infected fluids.

Lyme Disease

A tick must be attached to its host for at least 72 hours to transmit Lyme Disease. Liberal applications of a DEET based repellent, combined with post-cache inspections, should provide sufficient protection from disease-spreading ticks.
Despite having guidelines in place for the placement of geocaches, it isn’t uncommon for some geocaches that are against guidelines to slip through the cracks. Some might be questionably against guidelines to begin with. Some might be okay and it’s up to interpretation. Some just flat should never be placed. A geocache on school grounds is one of the latter. And lately, I’ve seen a few that slipped through the cracks.

Before continuing, let’s look at the guidelines regarding caches on school property.

Caches may be quickly archived if we see the following (which is not exhaustive): Caches near, on or under public structures deemed potential or possible targets for terrorist attacks. These may include but are not limited to highway bridges, dams, government buildings, elementary and secondary schools, and airports. There may be some exceptions. If your cache fits within one of the above areas, please explain this in a note to the reviewer.

If you are given permission to place a cache on private property, indicate this on the cache page for the benefit of both the reviewer and people seeking out the cache.”

Here’s what that means. It means that you should avoid placing caches near, on or under important public structures (while the local Burger King may be important to you, it’s likely not the first place a terrorist is going to attack). Structures that might be considered important in this way are those structures that, if attacked, will deal a blow to the community. Bridges, dams, airports, and government buildings are clear examples. Schools may not seem like a target for some, but attacking the place where the community children are at does deal a blow.

So how does this affect geocaching? It affects it because of the increased security that will likely result from suspicious characters wandering around them. The staff are often more observant to such behaviors. But that’s where that last paragraph comes in. If you obtain permission from a landowner, and inform your reviewer of this, they may allow the geocache because of the permission.

I’m here to try and convince you that even with permission, placing caches on school grounds is a BAD IDEA. I can stand here and argue that because I’m not only a geocacher,
I am a teacher. I work in those very schools. I am familiar with the policies common to many schools. I can vouch for what may potentially occur if a staff member observes you geocaching on school grounds.

From a geocaching perspective, school grounds aren’t always clearly marked. Depending on the school, you will have the school itself, the parking lot, and the “front lawn” of the school. If the school has a playground, or some sports field, that may also be part of the school grounds. But what about the nearby park behind the school? Or maybe that park across the street from the school?

In either of these cases, consider this. Is there additional parking away from the school for the park? If so, try to find a spot in the park close to that parking location as opposed to a spot in the area of the park closest to the school. The further from the school you are, the safer it is for the geocachers coming to find the cache. Aim to be at least .1 to .15 miles from the school. I have seen caches near schools where the best parking is not at the school, but at the parking lot on the opposite side of the park, over .1 miles away.

But if the best parking for the potential cache in that park is in the school parking lot, requiring a geocacher to pass through school grounds, then find another park. Only once have I ever seen an exception to this. A geocache was in a park that borders school grounds. The park had a thick tree line and a creek between it and the school. Due to the placement of the park, there was a small section of the corner of the school parking lot that was marked as being for the park. Then, there was a path from that section of the lot leading to the park. In this case, the parking for the school and the parking for the park were one in the same.

So why all the concern. It’s just a geocache, right? WRONG! In the eyes of the school, you are one of two things until proven otherwise.

1. A suspicious person wandering school grounds.

2. A suspicious person wandering school grounds and (if you are seen handling the geocache) placing a suspicious package on school grounds.

It used to be that people could walk by a school without raising suspicion. When I was in school, we had two drills: a fire drill and a tornado drill. Those drills still exist, but now there are also Green (everything’s safe), Yellow (lock classroom doors until told otherwise), and Red (lock doors, move away from windows and doors, turn off lights, stay quiet) Alerts, each one being used for a variety of situations, including suspicious people on school grounds. A lot of this is a result of the rise in school attacks over the last 15-20 years, especially after the Columbine incident in the late 90’s.

But school attacks aren’t the only thing that have raised concerns. In the last 15-20 years, news media have been a lot more observant about reporting suspicious characters hanging around schools, whether kidnappers, child predators, or sexual predators. This is definitely NOT a bad thing. It has raised awareness of the issue and resulted in many schools updating security policies in an effort to increase safety for children. Schools should be a safe place for students and these kinds of policies are needed in today’s day and age.

But for geocachers, this means that their actions are more carefully scrutinized. Even if you think you can get to the cache without being observed, if a staff member doesn’t see you, chances are that a student will. And if the student notices you, chances are quite good that they will point you out to a staff member.

Let’s say you were at my school (which you won’t be because many of my coworkers know I am a geocacher and I would likely be contacted if someone inquired about placing one at my school). And, let’s imagine that the geocache was in a location that allowed myself to see you approach and search for it. Even if I know why you are there, I am required to contact my administration and inform them of your activities.

Then, after they are informed, they would be required to investigate. Even if I have suspicions of why you are there, they are still required to investigate. If suspicions warrant it, the district resource officer would be contacted. That person is a police officer, so at this point the local police are involved. And once the police are involved, you now have not only the school administration, but also the district administration involved. Oh, and don’t forget that it only takes one phone call from a concerned parent, who likely received a text message from their kid using a phone that is supposed to be in their locker, and suddenly the news is involved. If a container is observed, the bomb squad will likely be called in. As many geocachers have read about, even if the bomb
squad suspects the container is a geocache, unless they can clearly identify the contents without opening it, it will be destroyed.

INSTANT PRESS COVERAGE! Now, we have bad press about geocaching all because you felt that the school had this perfect spot for a geocache. One more thing to consider. Depending on the actions of the suspicious person, the school will likely be evacuated. This is even more likely if the person is observed handling the cache container.

Now you might be tempted to ask “Why not just go after school?” That would seem like a likely option and it is definitely a better time to go after it. There is still one problem. Many schools are used even after school lets out. You have after school programs, sports, meetings, and then there is the janitorial staff. For many schools, the janitors are often working into the evening, meaning that the school still has people around who could potentially observe you.

Okay, so what if you obtain permission first. The school has approved it, so it should be okay then, right?

WRONG again! Just because the school has given permission does not mean that this permission is widely distributed amongst the staff. GEOCACHE PROMPTS BOULDER SCHOOL EVACUATION (do a search for “Geocaching + Colorado + evacuation” and you’ll likely find more articles)

In April of 2009, two geocachers pulled up to a high school sign, got out of their vehicle and began searching for a geocache placed in the bushes. The cache was a larger container that had been placed by a school teacher at the school with permission from school administration. The geocache was part of a classroom project and had been in place for two years.

On that fateful day, a staff member observed two suspicious people digging around the school sign, placing a container in the bushes. The staff member approached and asked what was going on, receiving one of the common “misdirects” that geocachers sometimes use. They then went inside and made some phone calls. Soon, the school was being evacuated under the direction of the local police. The bomb squad was called in and the news media showed up to report. All of this activity also meant that two backpacks, that had been abandoned by students within the school building in the rush to evacuate, were suddenly on the “suspicious” list as well.

Remember, this was an instance where the teacher had been given permission from the school. This should be proof that with regards to schools, permission doesn’t necessarily mean it is a good idea. I personally have plenty of room and lots of good hiding spots near my school. I refuse to use them because of the security issues it would create.

I’ll end by asking that you be careful about caches located near schools. Lately, I have personally contacted several cache owners to request that they archive their listings because of placement near schools. One of the worst I’ve ever seen was placed in a tree that was within 20 feet of an elementary school classroom window. Their argument, when I contacted them, was that the school was being closed down permanently. It had been placed near the end of the school year so no big deal. Well, one of the early finders happened to arrive right before recess. After waiting in the parking lot to replace the cache for an hour, they were approached by some pretty unhappy school officials who had seen the person. They did not sound amused by the situation, but the owner didn’t remove the cache after this was reported. I happened to come across the cache in the summer, after school was out. The school was still being used for educational purposes, including summer school and various organizations. Parents were picking up their kids as I approached the area, so I passed it up. It doesn’t matter if the school is closed or not, as long as anybody is using the school, it’s not a good location to place a cache.

The funny thing is that I’ve frequently observed other geocachers who don’t consider the consequences of these placements. Usually, this is because they are not aware of the problems it can create by allowing it to remain active. Some have even claimed having permission. One got permission because they were on the school board. Guess what? Of all the possible containers to use, they used an ammo can sitting behind the front sign of the school. I refuse to go after them, and I will contact the owners. I encourage everyone to do the same.

Because I am a teacher and a geocacher, I like to think my perspective on this provides me a unique opportunity to educate others on the dangers of geocaches on school grounds. I’m hoping this helps give you an idea of how the education world might view such a placement. +

Send comments on this story to: mail@tfgeocacher.com. We will forward your comment to the author for response in the next issue.
San Antonio Geocaching Awards

The San Antonio Geocaching Association (SAGA) held its annual geocaching awards show Saturday, November 21, 2009, at Rudy’s BBQ on the west side of San Antonio, Texas. The event was organized and hosted by SAGA member Fantastic 6.

Nominated caches, and events must have been placed or occurred in 2008, within a 100 mile radius of downtown San Antonio.

The Winners

Best Traditional
PAWN (GC1A11E)
by wanda texas

Best Puzzle
Ogma (GC1F1M0)
by Blig

Best Multi-Cache
Piece of Cake (GC1JDJ7)
by chemitzi & Jedi_Geocacher

Best Micro
Rubber Bone (GC1BQ8J)
by The Boners

Best Event
WWFM 4 - Big Boots (GC1HH3F)
by Electric Water Boy

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Best Event
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by Electric Water Boy

Best Theme Cache
Gnome Home 8 of 8 Bonus Cache (GC1HW5)
by Cryptofinder

Great fun and great barbecue was had by all at this year’s event. Organizers promise next year’s awards show will be scheduled earlier in the year.

The awards ceremony closed out with the presentation of door prizes including “pre-swagged” cache containers, courtesy of Fantastic 6 who asked they be placed as soon as possible so “I can go find them.”

If you would like your event featured in a future issue, send your story and photos to mail@ftfgeocacher.com

GeoSnippet

It was a Christmas Miracle (of sorts). Mention of the topic of “geocaching” generally elicited a roll-your-eyes response from my 19 year-old son. You can imagine my surprise over the Christmas holiday when he asked “So how does this work?” He was holding his iPhone up with Groundspeak’s geocaching app running – the paid version! Over the course of the holiday season he logged over 50 finds and we are now officially a Geo Family.

– ckpetrus –
Some of the best experiences in geocaching have little or nothing to do with actually finding the cache itself.

Approaching a cache tucked away inside a neighborhood park recently, I came face to face with a large gathering of geese. I was raised in a rural community and consider myself to be relatively knowledgeable about farm animals but was still taken aback by the size of the birds and their aggressive behavior. I considered turning back but finally mustered my courage and called their bluff.

The geese adopted various gangster poses as I approached. It was easy to imagine them being descendants of the dinosaurs and I took comfort in the fact they stood just three feet tall, not six. They blustered and ruffled their feathers but ultimately allowed me safe passage.

This was not my first encounter with the unexpected. It seems that each hunt brings a new and interesting discovery. In the course of my searches I’ve discovered obscure historical sites, interesting statuary and works of art, hidden cemeteries, majestic oaks, all manner of wildlife, abandoned buildings, and forgotten roadways – all of this, in the small portion of South Texas I call home.

Heading back to the car, I stopped to take photos of the geese in their multicolored finery. It occurred to me that I would never have known this park existed, much less interacted with a gaggle of agitated geese, were it not for geocaching.

This is the true value of the sport; the simple act of disrupting our normal routine and allowing for the unexpected.

Share your unexpected encounters. Email mail@ftfgeocacher.com or visit www.ftfgeocacher.com

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover”
— Mark Twain —
Geocaching Without a GPS
by M-T-P

Is a Global Positioning System (GPS) Receiver necessary for modern Geocachers?

In this modern age of detailed street maps, satellite maps, and now even “street view” photographs available at your fingertips, is a GPS receiver still necessary? To illustrate my point, I was in downtown Houston for a conference and was staying on the upper floor of a deluxe hotel. Even though I forgot to bring my hand-held GPS with me on the trip, I decided to locate my hotel on a Geocaching.com map to see how many geocaches were nearby. There happened to be two caches within a block of my hotel - one of which was right outside my window. Despite not having my GPS receiver with me, I decided that I wanted to go hunting for these caches anyway.

To find each cache, I thoroughly read the cache description, pulled up the Google Map view of the coordinates, zoomed in as much as possible, and could identify within approximately 10-12 feet exactly where the cache was hidden. If fact, I felt more confident about finding this cache than I usually do whenever I use my GPS. Not only did I know what area of town the cache was in, what street it was near, and what park it was inside; I could tell which tree it was under and almost which side of the shrubs it was on. Needless to say, it took me longer to ride the elevator down from my hotel room than it did to find this cache - even without a GPS.

Aerial views are great, but Google has gone one step further and added Street Views to its maps for most major metropolitan areas. This extremely close view can help you pinpoint exactly where a cache is located from ground-level. Using this feature, urban geocachers can not only see what an area looks like from above, they can view extremely close details of the hide location allowing them to scout out an area well before they arrive on the scene to begin searching. So, is a GPS receiver still necessary for Geocaching?

Hints & Tips

Scouting a location using Street View

I’m sure glad I noticed the bees before poking around their hive tree.

Battlefield Cross

How about my Mustang?
When technology instructor Mitzi Moore, of San Antonio’s International School of the Americas, searched for an opportunity to connect with her students in a meaningful and fun way, Geocaching seemed like the perfect solution.

Moore had only been caching a few months herself when she offered to sponsor a new geocaching club at the high school. The Club held its first meeting September 10th, 2008, during the lunch period. Moore guided the students as they familiarized themselves with the GPS by attempting to locate sets of specific coordinates on campus.

A week later, students were introduced to the geocaching.com website where they looked up caches on the route between school and home.

The next couple of meetings were dedicated to field-trip planning and educating the students’ parents about the activity. Moore created a permissions letter for parents to sign, then it was off to their first hunt on October 8th, 2008. Moore writes, “Had our first field trip: fourteen people, five cars, three locations, six caches found, one DNF (did not find).”

Over the course of the 2008/09 school year, the club visited numerous caches, often taking advantage of regular school field trips for caching side-adventures. The group, calling themselves the “Globies,” even placed a series of caches of their own along the route of San Antonio’s annual MLK civil rights march.

In October of 2008, the club’s student officers launched the “ISA Geocaching Club” group on Facebook. Thirty-six students immediately joined and the group has now grown to 54 members.

After such a successful inaugural year, Moore announced the club was “back by popular demand,” for the 2009/2010 school year. The Geocaching Club started off the new year with the election of officers in September.

In November, twenty six students from all four grade levels attended GIS Day in downtown San Antonio to learn about Geographic Information Systems (without which geocaching would impossible). Afterwards the group walked around the Riverwalk and downtown, finding four geocaches and multiple travel bugs.

Other caches and bugs were found on subsequent field-trips to Heifer Village in Little Rock, Arkansas, and the San Antonio Zoo.

As of December 4th, 2009, the “Globies” have 61 finds and are on track for another great year of caching.

Kudos to Mitzi Moore for her creative teaching methods. As if to reward her for her deeds, Ms. Moore’s geocache (Piece of Cake) won best Multicache of the year at the San Antonio Geocaching Association Awards.
Dear Parents,

Your son or daughter has expressed an interest in being part of ISA's new Geocaching Club. The goal of this club will be to use Global Positioning System (GPS) devices to find items that other geocachers have hidden. A hidden item is usually a container containing a log, some trinkets, and sometimes trackable items (called geocoins and travel bugs). If you would like to know more, I encourage you to visit the web site www.geocaching.com. This is a world-wide hobby that involves hundreds of thousands of people; over 600,000 geocaches exist all over the globe.

For the past few months, I have been geocaching with my young son, and have taken many people on hunts for caches. I want to share my interest in this habit with students, because it is fun and very educational.

We have had several informal meetings of the Geocaching Club so far. We've done some GPS training and learned to use the website. Because this is a new club, we have no funds. We are asking each member to bring 4 AA batteries for the GPS devices. We are excited about planning our first field trip.

I need you, as parents, to know that geocaching contains some uncertainties. Sometimes the hunt might lead us into the woods or behind an urban shopping center. Once I teach the students to geocache, I will encourage them to find things on their own time. Every family has different standards as far as teenagers being accountable to their parents. Whenever we have official events, I will post a notice on my website. If students want to geocache beyond these events, they will be responsible for themselves (and accountable to you); however, we will discuss common sense safety precautions together.

Most of the students who have been involved in our meetings so far are upperclassmen that drive. Because we are a new club, we do not have the funds to hire buses to take us around town. My plan at this point is to announce a field trip and have each student find his or her own ride to the meeting point (these will be after school trips). Please have a conversation with your son or daughter about how comfortable you are with them riding in the car of a young driver. If you prefer they ride with me, that can be arranged, but I have limited space in my own car. You are also free to drive them yourself (and cache with us, or drop them off and return later). I cannot provide rides home, so they will need to arrange their own transportation home afterwards.

Please sign below indicating that you have read this letter. I look forward to working with your children.

Sincerely,

Mitzi Moore, Club Sponsor

________________________________________   ______________________
Parent Signature       Date

________________________________________   ______________________
Student Signature      Date
Discovered while Geocaching

Get Along, Little Doggies · Beeville, Texas

Hallowed Ground
Papalote, Texas

You don’t know JACK (’s house) · San Marcos, Texas

It’s not just about trinkets, tupperware, and smileys. Submit your discovered-while-geocaching photos to photos@ffgeocacher.com
Discovering while Geocaching

Mount Rushmore’s Little Brother · Beeville, Texas

Sand Castles Built Here · Port Aransas, Texas

Bee County Irish - St Isidore Was A Farmer · Beeville, Texas
In 1943, as World War II raged in Europe, a crew of government surveyors dug a hole, poured concrete, and set a small bronze marker a few inches above ground near the railroad tracks in my hometown. Thirty years or so later, a much younger version of myself found the mark and wondered about the significance of the mysterious monument. I was fascinated by the deeply embossed brass emblem. As a novice coin collector, the benchmark seemed like a very large, albeit inaccessible, coin.

In my teenage years, benchmarks became a regular aspect of my life as I worked in my brother’s surveying business. We used the marks when “running levels” to determine differences in grade over specific pieces of property. We would take a “reading” on the mark with a special expandable pole marked in inches and feet, and use the results to calculate the rise and fall of terrain on the property we were surveying.

According to USGS (United States Geological Survey), Benchmarks can be divided into two general groups: Vertical control points are points that mark a very precise elevation above the standard datum plane (usually referred to as elevation above sea level). Horizontal control points are points with precisely established
Displaying Coins & Pathtags

by N9YBK

Looking for a way to display your geocoins and/or pathtags on the cheap? I picked up a 3-ring binder at Walmart for under $1.00. Then I went to Hobby Lobby and purchased a package of coin/stamp holder inserts for $8.00. I also purchased dollar-sized 2” x 2” coin mounts for $4.00 for holding pathtags and small geocoins. So for less than $15, I have a easy-to-make and portable way of displaying my collection.

USGS notes in their website that the National Geodetic Survey, not the U.S. Geological Survey, is the maintaining agency of federal Vertical Control Marks.

Fast forward another 30 or so years and benchmarks have once again entered into my life - now as an add-on to my hobby of geocaching.

Benchmark finds appear in your Groundspeak profile alongside the list of cache categories but do not count towards your cache finds total.

Why go for benchmarks? Finding benchmarks is a great way to extend the life of an area where you have visited all of the regular cache types. Like any cache run, there is also the possibility of discovering something new about the area and creating a memorable experience.

Benchmarks can also be educational. One of the benchmarks listed near my home was a church steeple. I was puzzled because the coordinates put the church in the wrong location. The benchmark description also noted that the church steeple could be seen from a nearby town about 8 miles away. “That’s impossible,” I thought. After a bit of research I learned two things.

1. The original church had burned and was rebuilt in another location.
2. Back in the early 1900’s, the area was mostly open grassland with just a few scattered oak motts to block the view of the horizon.

If you haven’t already done so, take a few minutes to look for the benchmarks nearby. It’s “almost” as fun as regular geocaching and you just might learn something!

Visit geocaching.com and click on the “Find a Benchmark” link in the left sidebar to search for nearby marks or for an exhaustive description of the types of benchmarks you may encounter.

Benchmarks are protected by law with a fine of $250 and possible imprisonment for disturbing the marker.
Corpus Christi Area Christmas Event

Yes Virginia, there is a Geo Santa! He arrives in a big yellow jeep just before Christmas with his bag stuffed with SWAG for all the good little micro-cacher girls and boys.

“It was great seeing all the cachers turn out for the event,” said organizer David Neill, aka daneill, aka Geo Santa. “I had a great time seeing the kids’ faces as they received the personal geocaching presents I made up.”

The guest list for this year’s event included, among others, Z.A.P., Pelican Palace, Bro Ray, lepew13, Papa Ray, CC-SCHMITZFAMILY4, ern21, She & He, cpetrus, clueless3, dcmceveigh, S.TxReedClan, and the 2~Sherlocks, who just happened to be passing through on their way to South Texas from Illinois.

Custom Geocoins

Trackable coins can be made any size and there are a lot of variables to consider when ordering and pricing of coins. We do the leg work of getting the numbers for you and each coin will come with a small sticker that includes the coin number and activation code.

Trackable Coins

- Houston Control
- Nov54
- Texas Challenge 2007
- Zephyr01
- Southeast Texas Gang

We usually receive your order 14 days after you approve the final design... Now, that is FAST!

http://atmatags.homestead.com/
F.B.I. Office of Parapsychology Research, Quantico Va
Lat. 38.52371 Lon. -77.30551.  
May 10th, 2009, 0900 hours

MULDER: Scully, do you believe in Geocaching?

SCULLY: Geocaching? Isn't that one of those mythical hippy geek cults? Something about a guy from Seattle who stuck an antenna in a frog?

MULDER: It's much more than a cult, Scully. They believe that there are fantastic treasures to be found by entering numeric data into small, hand-held devices, then following a little spinning arrow on the face of the device. The treasures are hidden in what they call "caches". That in itself is sufficient for speculation, but what really raises eyebrows is the fact that the whole process exists in-house, so to speak. The treasures which they hunt were all hidden by other cult members, in what some scientists have labeled "A giant game of hide & seek". They communicate their efforts secretly over the internet, using cryptic glyphs which the NSA still has not cracked, and they can only be identified by their code names. Messages such as TFTH, TN-LNSL, and FTF convey volumes of data to the initiates. Scully, this is no crackpot, hodgepodge assembly of computer gaming nerds. During a raid on what was supposed to be the cult's headquarters, documents were found indicating membership in the hundreds of thousands.

SCULLY: That's great, Mulder, but what does that have to do with us? As I recall, the whole Geocaching phenomenon was determined by the CIA to be a hoax, perpetrated by a handful of bored college students.

There is not one shred of physical evidence that the cult even exists.

MULDER: Scully, by now you should know better than to trust anything the government tells you. The CIA called it a hoax because it was in their best interest to do so. Fortunately, not everyone is as naive as you. To this day, there are thousands of otherwise normal people, scouring their local forests for these "caches". Recently, several people have reported unusual sights and experiences while hunting for caches hidden in the Juniper Springs region of the Ocala National Forest, in Florida. There have even been reported disappearances, which the local law enforcement agencies are helpless to stop.

SCULLY: So, you want to rush down to Florida, on company time, just so you can satisfy your overzealous imagination?

MULDER: I'm disappointed, Scully. Here's a perfect opportunity for you to prove me wrong, and you hesitate. (Mulder hands Scully a bundle of documents)

SCULLY: What is this supposed to be?

MULDER: Some friends of mine believe they have determined a means of finally proving this cult existed. These documents are reputed to be "Cache Printouts", which the initiates use to determine the locations of the caches they were looking for. As you will notice, all of these caches are in the same general area as the strange activity. That can't be a coincidence, Scully. There's got to be a connection. Are you willing to find the truth?

SCULLY: I'll go with you, but I have to tell you, I'm far more interested in finding the people who have been reported missing, if for no other reason, then to demonstrate that getting lost in the woods is statistically a result of too much beer drinking, combined with inadequate 4-wheel drive vehicles, and not due to the intervention of black helicopters or UFO's.

MULDER: Great! We leave at dawn. I've taken the liberty of hiring a guide. He's a fairly harmless crackpot by the name of Clan Riffster.

I've taken the liberty of hiring a guide. He's a fairly harmless crackpot by the name of Clan Riffster.

MULDER: Relax, Scully. It's not like you had a hot date. The wind is blowing gently through the pines, the birds are singing, what more could you ask for? Besides, Riffster assures me we're getting close, right, Riffster?

RIFFSTER: Huh? What? What? Were y'all talkin' to me? Sorry, I was listenin' to this here Hank Williams Jr tape. "Whiskey Bent & Hell Bound". Ever heard of it? Naw, never mind. You look like...
Yanni. You was askin’ about that there geocache. It’s gotta be here ‘bout somewhere. Keep lookin’!

SCULLY: Riffster, be honest. You don’t really believe in geocaching, do you?

RIFFSTER: Uh, yes Ma’am! I know it fer a fact! I seen one when I was knee high to a grasshopper. It was on the back side of Signal Mountain, where I done grew up. I was creepin’ through the woods, tryin’ to poach me a deer for dinner, and there it was, plain as day. A Tupperware container full of broken McToys, bottle tops and used Lotto tickets.

SCULLY: What makes you think it wasn’t just a plastic box full of junk?

RIFFSTER: Uh, no Ma’am! It was real! It said so right on the lid, plain as day! “G, E, O, K, A, S, H”. Besides, it had one o’ them stash notes inside.

SCULLY: What did the note say?

RIFFSTER: Uh, I’m not for sure. I don’t read none to good. (Mulder pokes around with a stick)

MULDER: Found it! Look Scully! Didn’t I tell you? This proves the whole geocaching myth is real!

SCULLY: No, Mulder. It only proves you found a metal box in the woods. Wait! What are you doing opening it?

MULDER: We need to sign the logbook and trade swag. You’re the forensics specialist here, Scully. Help me sort through this stuff.

SCULLY: Mulder, do you have any idea what kind of microbes can live in that environment?

MULDER: Relax, Scully. Have a McToy. Let’s go find the next one. I believe “Bear Attack” is closest, right Riffster?


Ocala National Forest, NE Quadrant
Lat. 29.19169 Lon. -81.65492
May 11th, 2009, 1022 hours

MULDER: What’s the matter, Scully? Afraid your sensible Catholic upbringing might be diminished by a simple search for the truth?

SCULLY: Mulder, we’ve been chasing shadows for hours now. Logic dictates that we resign this obsession of yours and get back to doing the job that the F.B.I. pays us for. Obviously that box you found was just a coincidence. We’ve got real cases waiting for us back at Quantico. There is nothing here.

MULDER: If that’s true, then why has that black Suburban been following us around all morning? Don’t you find that just a bit suspicious?

SCULLY: Mulder, these woods are used by outdoorsmen every day. Those guys are probably hunters.

MULDER: Wrong, Scully. (Mulder passes Scully a spotting scope) Look at the tires. They look like Goodyear XL Strikeforce radials. Those tires were developed for the NSA back in ’04, and were never released to the public. Look at the suspension. Anyone can tell it’s been beefed up, probably to support the additional weight of armor plating. Do you see the way the light prisms off the windshield? Bullet proof glass does that. And if that’s not enough to convince you of their nefarious purpose, how do you explain the dark window tint? That degree of reflectivity is illegal in Florida, unless you are in a government vehicle.

SCULLY: If they were sent to interfere with our objective, why are they just sitting there?

MULDER: They’re watching us to see how much we know, and what we discover. Mark my words, Scully, we haven’t seen the last of those guys. What do you think, Riffster?

RIFFSTER: That there is sure one purdy truck all right. Not near as purdy as you are, Ma’am. No offense. But you ain’t gotta go getting’ outta sorts. I mean, it’s just a Chevy. If’n it was one o’ them Jeeps, I’d be worried. Say, did you bring any beer?

MULDER: Your inebriation will have to wait. We’re on a mission here. Where’s that damn cache?

SCULLY: Mulder, we’ve been wandering around in circles for the last hour. We’ve checked under every rock, every leaf. There is not a square inch of this area we haven’t checked. If there was anything even remotely larger than a pinhead here, we would’ve found it by now.

MULDER: You may be right, Scully. This one may have been “muggled”.

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Cachers Up Close

How did you choose your cacher name? I went to Costa Rica on a trip with my best friend and it was my favorite vacation. The locals in Costa Rica go by the nickname of “Tico” so I chose the name “tico jeffrey”

Caching Since: 4/14/2007
GPS Used: Garmin Oregon 400t

Favorite Cache Type: Micro

Geocaches Placed: 88

I enjoy geocaching because: I like to be outside and I like spending time with my Grandmother and friends.

Memorable Caching Experience: When I went with my Aunt and her friends “AUZZIE DOGS” to Utah’s first mega event “Geocoinfest 2009 - Salt Lake City”.

Favorite Quote: Life is a game, caching is serious.
SCULLY: Muggled? What does that mean?
MULDER: Riffster’s been teaching me some of the geocaching vernacular. A “Muggle” is a person who doesn’t believe in geocaching. Someone like you, Scully.
SCULLY: Great. Another label, invented to foster an exclusionary atmosphere. So tell me Mulder. Are you finally convinced that geocaching is a myth? You’ve got the cache page print out in your hands. You can see we are at the right coordinates. Obviously there is no cache here, which puts a significant dent in your geocaching hypothesis.
MULDER: Relax, Scully. You’re wound way too tight. The lack of a cache at these coordinates does not disprove the truth. Your “hunters” have followed us here. That in itself is significant. Let’s not give up now, when we have another cache we can search for. The truth is out there, Scully. Riffster, what do you think?
RIFFSTER: Yup! It’s a DNF for shore. Dag nab it!
SCULLY: DNF…. What does that mean?
MULDER: DNF is an acronym, Scully. It means “Did Not Find”. Since we “Did Not Find” this cache, we call it a DNF.
SCULLY: We? Are you seriously contemplating joining this bunch of belly button lint collecting yahoos, who tromp through insect and snake infested woods in search of some ridiculous fantasy?
MULDER: Careful, Scully. You might start enjoying yourself. Right, Riffster?
MULDER: Why don’t we call it quits for now, and go find “SoulBait Springs”? I think it’s the next closest.

Random Geo Notes

Christmas Combo

This photo was taken at my “Merry Geocaching Christmas” event where we held a meet and greet and geocache container blind gift exchange. We also went out to my “Merry Christmas” cache to remove the ornaments and trimmings until next December. This cache/event idea is not my original idea, but a spin off of an idea I heard on Podcacher some time ago. It was a great time. – Submitted by wvangler

Ocala National Forest, NE Quadrant
Lat. 29.19245 Lon. -81.65710
May 11th, 2009, 1150 hours

MULDER: Looks like we’ll need to bushwhack from here, Scully.
SCULLY: Bushwhack? You want me to walk through that?
MULDER: Relax, Scully. It’s only 600’ or so through a swamp. It won’t kill you. Just follow Riffster. He cuts a pretty wide swath.
SCULLY: Don’t you mean he has all the grace of a herd of rampaging bull elephants?
MULDER: Something like that.
RIFFSTER: Here it is! Whoo Hoo!!! Yee Haw!!! I found me one! Hot Dog!
MULDER: Scully, that’s two out of three we’ve found. Still think it’s a myth?
SCULLY: Mulder, you’re quickly losing your objectivity. These woods have been used by yokels to dump trash for decades. I have no doubt that we could hike anywhere out here and find various types of containers, even ammo boxes. Just ask your nose picking “guide”. And while your at it, can you tell him to stop drooling while he’s looking at me? He makes me feel like a Thanksgiving turkey.
MULDER: Look Scully, just because he’s hygienically challenged, and has the IQ of a bag of hammers, doesn’t mean he’s not right about this. Don’t judge him by your urban standards. Sigmund Freud once said that people with an IQ gap of more than 40 points cannot communicate with each other. You just need to lower yourself to his level.
SCULLY: How’s this, Mulder; “Hey, Paw! You got’s any chawin’ toe-back-kee?”
MULDER: Sarcasm does not become you, Scully. Let’s press on to “Apocalypse, When”. It’s just a little ways upstream.
RIFFSTER: Is it time for beer yet?

Ocala National Forest, NE Quadrant
Lat. 29.19237 Lon. -81.66168
May 11th, 2009, 1202 hours

MULDER: There’s nothing here.
SCULLY: Mulder, we’ve only searched for 30 minutes or so. Why are you so
eager to give up on this one? 
MULDER: This one's been disabled, Scully.
SCULLY: Disabled? What is that supposed to mean?
MULDER: Remember "Muggled"? If a cache owner confirms that a cache has been mugged, he can "Disable" it, which officially tells the rest of the initiatives that it's not there.
SCULLY: Let me get this straight. You knew there was nothing here before we bushwhacked all the way out here and spent half an hour checking every palmetto and burnt tree trunk, fighting off mosquitoes, horseflies, deer flies, and God only knows what other parasites?
MULDER: Relax, Scully. It's the hunt that counts. Look at it this way, Scully. We've had a 50% confirmed success rate. That's a whole order of magnitude greater than our hunt for Bigfoot. That's two out of four that were right where the so called fictional cache pages said they'd be. 50% is far more than coincidence, Scully. Can't you even admit to the possibility that geocaching might be completely legitimate, and the only reason the general population isn't aware of it is because our Government is obfuscating the reality?
SCULLY: Sure, Mulder. If you say so. Look! Here's another "cache". And another, and another, and another. These woods are practically bristling with geocaches.
MULDER: Those are crumpled beer cans, Scully. There's a difference.
SCULLY: What difference, Mulder? You have a scrap of paper that claims we'll find some kind of container at a given set of coordinates. I'm simply pointing out the fact that you could change those coordinates to anything you like, and still find something there. I think you're confusing government conspiracies with littering. After four so called “hunts”, you haven't shown me a single shred of physical evidence to support the geocaching phenomenon. Riffster has fed you a steady diet of smoke and mirrors, and you lap it up, salivating like Pavlov’s dogs at the mere hint of a hidden box in the woods. Proof. That's all I ask. Is that too much?
MULDER: I suggest we head to the next cache on our list, “Paint Fiction’s Apocalypse”. Maybe that’ll convince you.
SCULLY: I’ll humor you for now, Mulder, but I’m growing weary of chasing shadows.
RIFFSTER: Ma’am, this ain't no myth. I swear upon my Paw Paw’s grave it's for real. You just gotta believe!
SCULLY: Thank you for your unasked for opinion, Riffster. Now get your hand off my shoulder before you draw back a nub. You haven't bathed in days, and you are dripping grease and BBQ sauce. This is a $400 Armani jacket you just stained. And for the love of God, can you please stop picking your nose around me?
RIFFSTER: Yes, Ma'am. Sorry, Ma'am. Please don't kill me lady. My young'un wouldn't cotton to me comin' home dead. I won't be touchin' you no more. Shake? (extends hand)
SCULLY: Oh, the irony.
MULDER: Scully, quit picking on the boy. You can't have a battle of wits with someone who's unarmed, right, Riffster?
RIFFSTER: I ain't got no gun!
MULDER: See what I mean, Scully?
SCULLY: (Sigh)
MULDER: Your “hunters” are back, right on queue. We need to lose them before we start our search. Let's go!

**Illustration:**

"Please don't kill me lady. My young'un wouldn't cotton to me comin' home dead!"

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Ocala National Forest, NE Quadrant
Lat. 29.18359 Lon. -81.66795
May 11th, 2009, 1511 hours

MULDER: Stay down!
SCULLY: My God, Mulder! What is that?
MULDER: In 1947, a great deal of unusual debris was recovered from a ranch near Roswell New Mexico. The Roswell Army Air Field issued a press release stating that a “flying disk” had been discovered. Within hours, a retraction was issued by the Pentagon, claiming instead that it was just a weather balloon. In 1978, Jesse Marcel, one of the people involved in the original debris recovery, expressed his belief that there had been a cover-up of the recovery of an alien craft. Additional witnesses and reports emerged over the following years. They added significant new details, including accounts of a large military operation to recover alien craft and aliens themselves, as many as 11 crash sites, and intimidation of witnesses. In 1989, former mortician Glenn Dennis revealed a detailed account which included alien autopsies carried out at the Roswell base.

In response to these reports, the Secretary of the Air Force released two reports. The first one, released in 1995, concluded that the material reported recovered in 1947 was likely debris from a secret government program called Project Mogul. The second report, released in 1997, addressed the reports of aliens and concluded these reports were likely transformed memories of the recovery of anthropomorphic dummies in programs like Project High Dive, conducted in the 1950s. The psychological effects of time compression and memory contamination explained the discrepancy with the years in question.

These UFO remains were eventually brought to the Air Force Flight Test Center, Detachment 3, at Groom Lake, an ultra secret military testing site known locally as Area 51.

SCULLY: OK, Mulder. Even if all that hyperbole was real, those sites are in New Mexico and Nevada. What does that have to do with anything in Florida?
MULDER: Do you think New Mexico holds patents on UFO crashes? They have happened here, as well. Scully, did you happen to notice that the most prominent structure utilized on the private property surrounding the Ocala National Forest are mobile homes? Studies at Stetson University have shown a direct link between mobile homes and UFO sightings. Some speculate that there is some...
unknown factor in the unique composition of mobile homes which actually attract UFO’s.

In 1963, the Marion County Sheriff’s Office responded to this location to investigate a reported UFO crash. The initial deputies on scene confirmed over their radios that it was, in fact, a vehicle from outer space. The Air Force sent in troops, and those deputies were removed from duty, never to be heard from again. 12 hours later, this entire area was cordoned off. The Air Force claimed it was a small personal airplane that crashed. Do you think a trained deputy sheriff could mistake a Cessna for a UFO?

Now, the Forestry Service claims this is a protected wetland, using endangered plant species as an excuse to keep people out. Look at those formations, Scully. Does that look like an endangered wetland to you? Obviously, the government intends on keeping this area secret, and since geocachers know about it, their entire existence must be made questionable. It’s apparent that whoever hid these caches out here has had enough of the cover-up, and has decided to use geocaching as a medium to spread the truth.

RIFFSTER: I’m Skeered! I wanna go home! I don’t wanna play no more!
SCULLY/MULDER: Shut up, Riffster! SCULLY: Sorry….. Mulder, this is amazing. We need to make this public. We should take lots of pictures, interview the locals, bring in the media…..
MULDER: You would be silenced, Scully. Hear that “Whop Whop” sound? That’s not a bunch of natives opening tubes of Pillsbury biscuits. That’s a Blackhawk helicopter. It’s coming our way. We need to get out of here, fast.

F.B.I. Headquarters, Office of Public Relations, Washington, D.C.
Lat. 38.89534 Lon. -77.02489
May 11th, 2009, 1700 hours

F.B.I. DIRECTOR JOE SMITH: Ladies and gentlemen of the press. It is with much regret, that I must announce the loss of two field agents. Agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully were on vacation, camping in the Ocala National Forest in Florida. It appears they became disoriented, and got lost. Without food, water or shelter, they succumbed to the elements, and perished. Funeral services will be tomorrow at 8:00, at Arlington National Cemetery. These will be closed casket affairs at the request of their families.

On a side note, the F.B.I. is currently seeking a Florida resident by the name of Riffster, who may have had contact with agents Mulder and Scully prior to their deaths. He is reportedly described as an ol’ fat crippled guy, with thinning hair, wearing a smelly hat, driving a green Toyota 4x4. He can often be seen wandering around in the woods with a handheld GPSr, muttering “Found It!” over and over.

Top Secret NSA confinement facility
Lat. Unknown Lon. Unknown
May 11th, 2009, 20150 hours

MULDER: Damn it, you have no right to hold us here! We’re federal agents! I demand to speak with someone in charge!
SCULLY: Relax, Mulder. Shouting won’t get us out of here. Our only hope lies in the fact that they haven’t captured Riffster yet. If he can expose those caches we found, maybe he can generate enough publicity, and they’ll have no choice but to let us go.

Oval Office,
The White House
Lat. 38.89748 Lon. -77.03658
May 17th, 2009, 1600 hours

PRESIDENT OBAMA: My fellow Americans, I’d like to take this time to apprise you of some recent, startling developments. As you know, our great country abounds with myths and legends which have passed from one generation to the next. One of those myths, called “Geocaching”, has just been confirmed by the NSA as a real hobby.

The story came to light when one of the players of the game, known locally as “Clan Riffster” contacted the New York Times with photo documentation of one particular set of geocaches along a creek in the Ocala National Forest, in Florida.

My security specialists have analyzed his photos and they’ve determined that they are not fakes. This leaves us with little choice but to accept the existence of this hobby. Folks, this hobby is as real as Rosie O’Donnell’s waist line. Mark my words ladies and gentlemen, we haven’t seen the last of this game.

Now I’d like to introduce FBI Director Joe Smith, who has some related news.

F.B.I. DIRECTOR JOE SMITH: Ladies and Gentlemen of the press, it is with a glad heart that I announce our earlier reports regarding the deaths of Agents Scully and Mulder were premature. It appears that they suffered some unknown calamity in the Ocala National Forest, and were found wandering around. Both agents have been diagnosed with amnesia, and have no recollection of their activities since their mysterious disappearance last week. As to whose bodies are buried in their graves, we have no comment. For those of you wondering why there has been a dramatic increase in military troops near Juniper Springs, we have no comment.

Members of the press, the balding obese gentleman to my right is Clan Riffster. He has agreed to answer some questions. Please limit your questions to words of less than four syllables, as he is a dimwit.

RIFFSTER: Howdy Y’all! How you doin’?
PRESS DWEEB: Mr Riffster, you’ve cracked open one of the oldest myths of our country’s history. What are your plans now?
RIFFSTER: I’m goin’ to Disney World! Whoo Hoo!!!
CC-SCHMITZFAMILY4

Shelby, Leslie, Rebekah, and Rachel.

**Caching Since:** June 7, 2009  
**GPS:** iPhone  
**Signature Item:** We will be getting a wooden nickel in time with our name on it.  
**Meaning of Cacher Name:** We wanted everyone to know where we were from, our last name, and how many people in our family.  
**Reason for Caching:** It gets the whole family involved and it makes you find places that you may have never visited.  
**Most Memorable Hunt:** The most memorable one thus far is a cache that was put out by a good friend. The name of the cache is *Great Flaming Ball of Cache*, and was placed by cacher ckgpeutus.

We get an email that a new cache was put out. It was about 10 p.m. On the cache it has that you can’t go at night. Well, we want to be FTF and we need to beat another cacher to be FTF, so we set the alarm to get to the cache at daybreak. I slept through the alarm and we woke up late. We take off. When we get close to the cache we see the other cachers car, and realize that we are both going to get to the cache at the same time. Fine. I guess we won’t be FTF. The cache hint was “pull on the string.” We did and what we saw was the coolest thing ever. We got back in the car to head home and our youngest daughter asked “What was that orange thing.” Do the cache and you will understand the answer we gave.

Another memorable cache was put out by dcmveigh. It is called *Rise and Shine... It’s Sunrise*. We had just started caching and really had no clue yet what we were doing, or what we were looking for. We go to where it tells us to go and it takes us to a lamp post in a mall parking lot. We look up and see this thing. Not really sure what we are looking at, we drive around and look at the other lamp posts and don’t see anything like it – go back to the original lamp post and agreed that what we are seeing 30 feet up is the cache. HOW THE HE-- DO WE GET IT DOWN? The original owner of our house had this bamboo fishing pole. We run home and get it. Needless to say we got it down. What made it even sweeter was we were FTF and it was our very FIRST FTF. We are so happy that Mrs. Schmitz’s cousin got us into geocaching. We love it.

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**THE NEVER ENDING SEARCH FOR THE PERFECT CACHE CONTAINER**

**I Could Make a Cache Out of That**

I came across this container at the local supermarket mega-store and immediately thought “I could make a cache out of that.” At least until I saw the price tag was around $5. Even so, the way the little acrylic lid handle folds down, engaging the seal on the container, is pretty neat – and it’s still probably cheaper than an ammo can.
I was introduced to geocaching by a friend in 2006. His name is Marion McMillan. I met Marion after the fire department I volunteered with did an article in the local newspaper. It was an effort to recruit more volunteers. I was at the fire station the day Marion called. He had read the article and was intrigued with the idea of volunteering. But he was concerned with his physical ability and not being able to perform the duties of a firefighter. He was however interested in volunteering in a non-firefighting role. So we arranged for a meeting at the fire station. When he walked through the door I instantly understood why he wasn’t interested in an actual fire fighting position. He was about 6’ 4” stooped over, tipping the scales at an easy 97 pounds soaking wet, sunken eyes, carrying a large bottle of Mt. Dew and an unlit cigarette hanging from his ear. I immediately was reminded of a mortician from some long ago horror movie. I would have never thought that Ol’ Marion would be able to do anything physical like geocaching. He just didn’t fit my vision of a fit individual, with his cigarettes and Mt. Dew diet.

But a few years after he had left the department, gotten married, moved to Florida, and went to work at a mortuary, hmm… kind of eerie but in my mind very understandable, he came for a visit. That’s when he introduced me to geocaching. He showed me the website geocaching.com. I thought it sounded interesting and wanted to give it a try. I showed the website to my wife, Teacup, and explained the concept to her. Now, as a fisherman I recognize what my friend had done was bait the hook and now I was nibbling at the bait. One thing was lacking, the proper equipment. NO GPS! I had always tossed around the idea of purchasing a GPS for my fishing & hunting adventures. Teacup said I already spend too much on fishing and hunting. So unless I hit the lottery, which requires a ticket purchase…, meaning spending more money, I could not purchase a GPS. But wait, I’ve got an angle and I can start working the lure so Teacup will bite on the GPS idea HA!

I explained how healthy geocaching can be. It requires hiking and climbing hills, basically getting off my rear and getting some exercise that we could do it together and as a family. I am feeling her start to nibble at the lure, so I start working it a little more. Plus it would keep me from getting lost when I was out hunting or hiking to a remote fishing area and I could return home in a timely manner. Funny thing though she began to laugh & repeating;

“You not get lost and make it home in a timely manner…now that is hilarious.”

But the idea really got her thinking. This may just be the thing that we both needed to do since she doesn’t care for fishing or hunting. She loves to spend time with yours truly (that would be me in case you’re wondering). She saw an opportunity for us to finally do something together. BAM!!! SET THE HOOK…FISH ON!!!

She agreed to let me purchase a handheld GPS. WHOOPIE!!! Wait there was a stipulation though, I couldn’t go overboard on the cost. Darn, that leaves out the Garmin RINO 520 I was eyeing. Oh well, at least I got my GPS: a Garmin eTrex Legend C.

Now I couldn’t wait to get out and find my first cache (notice I said my?). So off I go to geocaching.com and register us as Ellis Clan GeoSnoops. Yep I forgot the space in our username on the geocaching.com website also.
It has now become our trademark so to speak. That would be the first and most minor of some of the mistakes I made during this trial period. There are too many to list here. I’ll give you a couple of examples.

One mistake was downloading a geocache that was too close to home. Making it too easy to say... “Hey this will be a quick one and she won’t mind if I go by myself”. So off I go.

Another mistake was not waiting for Teacup to come with me searching for the geocache. I went without her. BAD BAD BAD!!!

Now I would consider those two mistakes as just one mistake. But uh-uh, not the Ogre – oops I mean Teacup. She keeps a list and wrongly counts it as two separate incidents creating two mistakes.

She almost spit the hook along with shooting fiery arrows out of her eyes. I pulled some fast moves and dodged a big bullet by explaining to her that I was just learning to use the GPS. She just glared at me, abruptly turned looking back over her shoulder with a loud HMMPH, and left the doghouse. Whew that was close. At this point I must explain the doghouse. It’s not necessarily just for our dog. I found this out early on in our marriage. It is a place where I can go and reflect upon what she calls “your indiscretions”. Though it sounds like a hardship, I find it very comfy when I take a blanket and pillow with me. Later that night I was allowed to leave the doghouse and return to “HER” house. I immediately logged on to Geocaching.com and called, wait...“asked,” her to come and check out the website. She complied, no, there I go again, she allowed me to show her the website. We brought up some caches close to our home coordinates and read a few logs. We then “together” read about first to finds, travel bugs and other trackables. We began reading more logs and I noticed that other cachers had cool nicknames.

I said, “Babe, we need to come up with a unique name to sign logs with.”

Again I get this glare and she states “I’ve got a few good names for you Buster. But they are not very unique.”

You decide to go geocaching, gather up your GPS, and plan to head out to your target destination. What else to bring? The following list of items may be helpful to insure you have a good geocaching experience. You may not need everything on the list, some are important and some are essential. It may be a good idea to make yourself a basic geocaching pack and bring these items with you.

- **Cache Page**: The first essential item is your cache pages, downloaded or paper. You need to know where you are going, parking coordinates and cache information are very important to make your geocaching day successful.
- **Cell Phone**: Take along your cell phone for safety and emergencies. Also, for those important phone-a-friends calls for cache information.
- **Water Bottle**: Bring along ample supply of water. For long hikes take a camelback hydration water pack. It is very important to stay hydrated and keep your body healthy during any hike.
- **Nutrition**: Pack a snack for a long adventure to keep your body well fueled.
- **Maps**: A good trail map and a topo map will make your navigation easier.
- **Compass**: Not essential, but helpful knowing which direction is North when you are trying to navigate to a cache.
- **Flashlight**: It’s important to bring a flashlight, many times you need that extra light to shine into that tricky cache hide. For safety, be prepared as dusk falls sooner than you expect when out on the trails.
- **First Aid Kit**: Your pack should include the basic first aid kit.
- **Insect Repellent**: Mosquitoes, say no more. Always spray your pant legs with any product which contain deet, this will help to keep the ticks away. Ticks are out all year, even in the winter months. You may also consider clothing which repels the bugs and screens the sun, Buzz-Off™ apparel from Ex Officio.
- **Camera**: Always a good idea to have a camera to capture a great geocaching moment. You never know when that Kodak moment will present itself, a beautiful view, a bear or proof that you saw bigfoot.
- **Extra Batteries**: Carry spares for each device you take along, such as your GPS unit, flashlight and camera.
- **Proper Clothes / Outerwear**: Depending on your adventure, make sure you are properly outfitted. Depending on the climate, wear the correct clothes and proper hiking shoes. Bring some outerwear and a hat for unexpected rain. A good hiking pole is helpful on the different terrain you may encounter.
- **Sunglasses**: It’s important to protect your eyes from the ultraviolet light and glare on those bright days. Longer hikes in the snow glare and wind may require wraparound glasses for added protection.
- **Sunscreen**: Apply before you go out and bring it to reapply along your hike.
- **Notebook & Pens**: Micro caches do not have pens or pencils, regular caches do contain pens, but in the winter the ink is frozen and sometimes the pencils are missing their point. A notebook is a good idea to record cache information and field notes. You can record waypoints, coordinates, discover tb’s and geocoins, and record what you left in the caches.
- **Cache trade items**: Caches contain various trade items, bring along an assortment of items of different value. Trade like for like value when trading at each cache.
- **Miscellaneous**: Tweezers for retrieving those nano logs, a small magnifying glass for those hard to read geocoin numbers, and a whistle to signal for help or scare that curious coyote.

So, build yourself a geocaching pack and keep it ready for your next geocaching adventure. Advance preparation and the safety of having these essential items will make the unexpected a safe experience.

*Have a great adventure. – Old Navy*
I chose my own. Since I am a firefighter and I love my job, I chose the very unique nickname of “Fyrfyter”. Again she laughed, go figure. Now we needed one for her, so I started with a couple of suggestions.

So I pop up with, just kidding mind you, “Since you really like pancakes how about Aunt Jemima?” Boy, she did not like that one… I almost ended up back in the doghouse.

Again kidding I say “Well if you’re going to act like that how about “Geo Ogre”? Wham!!! I had with those words unsuccessfully chosen my sleeping arrangements for the night.

When I was once again “allowed” to return to “Her” house I was informed that yes, she was still interested in geocaching. However she has some rules. Geez!! Not again with “Her” rules.

One… She will pick her nickname with no comments from the peanut gallery (that would be me)”. She chose Teacup. I would have at least spelled it in a unique way, like maybe “T-Cup”.

Two… From now on she would choose the caches that we searched for and, “They weren’t going to be any of those “pansy caches” (her words not mine) that doesn’t even get our cardio up.” Suggesting that I may have forgotten that were doing it for the “exercise”.

Three… We “WILL” cache together as a team.

I think I may have bit off a little more than I wanted to chew this time.

Teacup chose for our first cache one named Lil’ Bubba’s Cache, placed by a 5 year old and his parents. There were some pictures of the family sitting at the cache, and a couple of the little tyke walking to and from the cache carrying a GPS. Ah, looks like an easy one. So off we go to find our first Geocache together.

“Lil’ Bubba’s Cache” was hidden in an area that was inaccessible to the likes of me. Making my way to the cache I was faced with a few perils along the way. I tore my trousers because the Garmin didn’t point the way around the slash pile. I trekked around the small pond (more like Lake Erie). Again I blame that one on the Garmin. Crawling through some brush thickets that would choke a jackrabbit because I was too exhausted from the trek around “Lake Erie” to stand up and see the clearing just a few feet away. I finally get to where the Garmin is reading distance to end of only fifty feet and it’s pointing right at a Russian Olive grove. For those of you who have not had the pleasure of trekking through Russian Olive trees I will describe them…branches that grow in every direction from the ground up with large thorns on every branch of the tree. Once again I end up on my hands and knees crawling through the thicket. The Garmin now was showing twenty five feet. I’m getting closer now. Twenty feet and my anticipation is building, so I begin to rush a little. With the Russian Olive thorns tearing into my clothing and flesh it now reads fifteen feet. At ten feet my heartbeat increases rapidly and I get the old competitive flow going. I tell myself I’m going to find this one before Geo Ogre… oops I mean Teacup, can spot it. 5 feet and I’m smelling victory rejoicing in the fact that even SHE can’t take away my glory this time. Then it hits me she? Hmmm where is she? She was right behind me when we left the truck. Oh well this cache is mine and I’m logging it. I bust through the thicket to the other side with the Garmin showing 0 feet. The sweat running in my eyes blended with tears as I viewed the site before me. There strewn about the ground the large green military ammo can lid wide open and its contents spread about the ground. I think to myself, “I read about this, it looks like it had been raided by non-cachers. We in the Geocaching world call them Muggles. Thinking to myself “Dam Muggles found it!” Wait!!! I hear something.

That evil voice of an ogre was asking, “Where have you been? What took you so long?”

Still on my hands & knees I strain to look up as the pain from my wrenched neck intensifies. There standing before me is “IT” (her).

With an evil ogre smile she sweetly tells me, “I found it, I found my first geocache and I’ve logged it in the cache log book.”

I grab the log book and read, Teacup 6/23/2006. Then I notice another interesting thing. There were no other logs in the log book. She was the first person to find the cache and logged a first to find, MY first to find.

“Well congratulations,” I barked. “Honey,” she says, “There is so much cool stuff to trade here but I forgot to grab the bag of trading stock from the pickup. Be a dear and go back and get it for me please.”

I start to protest but she stops me with, “It’s supposed to get real cold and rainy tonight and that doghouse doesn’t hold the heat very well.”

Well at least I have already blazed a trail from the pickup it won’t be that bad.

I return to the cache with the bag and a few more wounds and drag myself up next to her. She places her arm around my shoulders and gives them a little hug.

“Isn’t this fun? We finally have something that we both like doing and we can do it together forever,” She coos.

Me, I’m just thinking of the trip back to the pickup and wonder if we are going to make it back in one piece. As I’m gazing at the sun shining on her hair and not a lock out of place and the beautiful blue blouse… huh, not a lock out of place? Waaaaaaiiiitt!!! A realization hits me like a brick to the back of the head.

“Snoookums,” (I’m really thinking Ogre though) I say sweetly, “How did you find the cache so fast and without having the Halloween?”

With a cheesy ogre grin on her face I hear, “Why honeybunch, when I climbed over the fence stile there was an obvious path that I followed right to the cache. It’s called a Geopath. I read about them on the internet.”

ARRRRGGGGGGGGG!!!

We now have 2 handheld Garmin GPS units, a Tom-Tom, GPS/PDA combo and our phones each have GPS capabilities. We are now hooked and look forward to every chance we get to go geocaching together.
A Review by Evelev. Excerpted from her blog “Geocaching with Evelev and Brian”

From time to time I search my DirecTv guide for all things Viggo Mortensen. Seriously, how can you not love him? If I could go geocaching with anyone living or dead, it would be him. That’s not a slam to the people I have already cached with, it’s just a fact.

Anyway, one of the items that popped up was an interview with him on some PBS show... but it was on a PBS I don’t have. So I went to the PBS I do have, to see if I could find it there. I did not achieve Viggo-glory, but I did come across a geocaching documentary, aptly named, Geocache.

Let me first say that throughout the course of this documentary I repeatedly uttered the words “I’m not like that... I’m normal” while rocking back and forth. Brian laughed, a lot.

Those interviewed included Geocachers at GeoWoodstock IV, Jeremy Irish (Groundspeak), and Park rangers from Larimer county, Colorado (where Brian and I got married...some of you were there)

The geocachers scared me, probably because I could have given the exact same interviews. First, they all mentioned their screen names (as they should); unfortunately, screen names used off-line are the epitome of dweebiness. Second, they were hardcore, and not in a good way. One of the interviewees was a lady with the most finds (16,000 in 2007). She said (paraphrased), “I have a business, but my husband runs it so I can do this... I miss my kids, they lost interest a long time ago.” Yikes.

And then, there was the on-going debate between geocachers and park rangers. It went something like this:

**Geocachers:** We have a right to do this. **Park Rangers:** We’re sick of rescuing your asses. **Geocachers:** Geocaches are not litter. **Park Rangers:** Your crap is bad for the wildlife. **Geocachers:** We promote awareness and appreciation of state parks. **Park Rangers:** So called “geotrails” destroy flora and fauna.

I was thoroughly surprised at how much park rangers dislike geocachers. It makes sense. Geocachers aren’t always seasoned hikers. We don’t usually plan out where I’m (I mean we’re) going. I just want the blue dot to match up with the green dot. Yet, the geocachers were completely unapologetic. Can we just admit that we’re kind-of a nuisance? Not all of us, but enough to cause trouble.

Other highlights included a Canadian geocacher who dresses up like Batman (yes, he caches in a cape), and a guy who found himself without a pen and signed the log in blood. I signed in pink highlighter once...

I thought I was a geo-dweeb, but it is not so. I’m average. Mundane, even. It’s okay, I’d like to think of myself as the friendly, unobsessed face of geocaching that muggles can relate to. I’m positively nerd-chic. +

For more information, or to order a DVD of the film, visit http://www.davidliban.com/geofilm/

Contributor Evelev hails from Florida where “By the grace of God, I haven’t come across poison ivy, or been stung by a scorpion, or disturbed a hungry bear.”

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**Signal Cookies!**

So, I am by no means a professional cake decorator, but I think they turned out well in a cute, Cake Wrecks-ish sort of way. I handed them out at the Christmas Tree Cache and I’m pretty sure the other cachers appreciated them in spite of their clumsy appearance.

At any rate, I know they taste great! I used an old family recipe for shortbread to make the cookies. For my next attempt, I may try an icebox sugar cookie recipe with green food colouring added to the dough. That way I can add details onto the green background for a better effect. We’ll see. – geonarcissa – geocaching in ottawa and beyond
Splinterheads

I was all set to drive into Austin for the weekend to see the new Brant Sersen film “Splinterheads,” whose trailer prominently featured geocaching. Unfortunately, the film’s run at Austin’s Regal Arbor Cinema ended before I made it into town. Hmmm... so if I can’t review the movie, why not review the reviews? Here goes, with a special emphasis on references to geocaching:

**New York TimeOut.com:** “Built around the anthropology of carnival life and the phenomenon of geocaching, Brant Sersen’s rom-com is equal parts Hollywood meet-cute and quirky coming-of-age tale. Listless loser Justin Frost (Middleditch) meets a game-booth operator, known as a splinterhead, named Galaxy (Taylor), who searches for hidden containers in her spare time.”

**Marjorie Baumgarten, Austin Chronicle:** “Galaxy introduces him to her hobby of geocaching, an activity which, to my knowledge, is making its feature film debut.”

**Roxanne Downer, A1MovieReviews.com:** Things start to look up for the unlikely pair when Justin discovers Galaxy’s endearingly dorky geo-caching hobby (think of it as treasure hunting, aided by GPS and the Internet) and the two embark on a trip to find a “cache” that’s extra special to her.

**OxfordFilmFreak.com:** Galaxy is an interesting character that while starting off by scamming Frost ends up for whatever reason falling for the goofy and awkward guy. They spend time together while she is geocaching, the hobby helping to shape her character and reveal a side to her that humanizes her as more than a splinterhead.

If the word geocaching means nothing to you, it is sort of a treasure hunt using a GPS – people leave and take little treasures. I don’t really get it – but have yet to try it so who knows. Galaxy seems pretty into it and a fairly interesting scene helps explain the hobby.

**Christopher Luu, Shakefire.com**
“Geocaching is pretty cool, though, and I thought it was pretty awesome that they included that as a pretty major plot point in the movie.”

**OregonLive.com:** “Rather than having Galaxy arrested, Justin spends the rest of the movie bumbling after her -- at the nearly empty carnival, at a swimming hole, on hikes -- as she indulges her “quirky” habit of geocaching.”

**Nick Schager, SlantMagazine.com:** “It turns out that Galaxy works at the local fair, though she isn’t just an ordinary carny but, rather, a hustler known as a splinterhead, albeit one who has plenty of time to ditch work and go geocaching, which is a super-cool GPS treasure hunting game.”

**Neil Miller, FilmSchoolRejects.com:** “Her character (Galaxy) is a well-traveled girl who is way into GeoCaching (which sounds pretty cool, for the record)...”

**Ammon Gilbert, Film.com:** “Galaxy’s obsession with geocaching, a modern-day treasure hunt, puts the two in “getting to know you situations” that are fun and different, breaking the status quo set by other romantic comedies, yet keeping it real and funny.”

*Splinterheads will be released on DVD February 23, 2010.*
It seemed like such a simple idea. While scouting out a location for a possible cache hide, I came across the site of an old chain link fence line that had been removed. Instead of pulling the concrete-embedded metal posts, they had simply been cut about an inch above ground level. I knew right away that this was the spot to place my cache, but how to pull it off?

A couple of cups of coffee later it hit me. I would place a cache that would require the finder to actually “fish” for the cache down one of the metal pipes. To add to the fun, I would create a whole “mess” of smaller dummy fish... drop them down the other post holes... and title it “Cache of the Day.” I would set the cache coordinates at the first hole, down which I would drop the “fishing pole” required to retrieve the cache, and the finder would have to figure out the rest.

“The best part about the idea,” I thought, “is that it’s so simple... what could possibly go wrong?”

I set about cutting the “fish” out of a large wooden dowel that had been languishing without purpose in my garage for the last 10 years. I drilled out the center of the largest section and gorilla-glued a small bison tube into the opening. I did the same with a smaller section of dowel to house the cap of the bison. Into the top of the cap, I drilled a shallow cavity to place the magnet. Thinking ahead (not a habit I often practice), I set a small wood screw below the magnet to give it something with which to adhere. A healthy application of hot glue would guarantee, or so I thought, that the magnet would stay in place.

With the cache components complete, I set them out and published the cache. The first few cachers seemed to really enjoy “fishing in the South Texas dirt” and I patted myself on the back for a job well done.

Then the rains came.

After suffering through a year-plus drought, the rain returned with a vengeance. I worried that the whole area would be flooded, the post holes would fill with water, and my little fish would “migrate” upstream, never to be found again. But, the location was on high ground and, after checking on the cache, everything seemed to fine, albeit a little messy.

Then the calls began.

“Dude, I think I broke your cache,” the caller reported. “The magnet came loose and the whole thing fell back down the hole.”

No worries. I drove out to the site to repair the cache. Using a few thumbtacks on a stick, I was able...
to fish out the wooden dowel. Sure enough, the rain soaked wood had loosened the grip of the glue.

I decided to take the cache home for a slight upgrade. I knew that glue alone was not going to solve the problem so I dug an RC Cola can out of the trash and cut little circles out large enough to fit over the of the dowel ends - covering the magnets. Using finishing nails, I securely encircled the magnet and noted with satisfaction that my little fish now had a decidedly steam-punk appearance.

With the cache back in place, everything went pretty well for a month or two. The cache was in a relatively remote location and didn’t get many visitors anyway.

Then another call came in.

“Hey man, I’m sorry but the top came off your cache and the bottom part fell back down the hole. What do you want me to do?”

I asked the caller to leave the top near a designated spot at the fence line and drove back out to take a look. This time, the top of the bison tube had separated from its wooden cap (again a glue failure).

So, it was back to the shop where it took a drill and wood screw to secure the cache lid. While making the repair, I noticed the aluminum from the RC Cola can holding the magnet in place was already starting to corrode and turn brittle. “What the heck,” I thought, “I’ll fix that the next time.”

What have I learned from all this? Aside from the fact that homemade containers need to be built to industrial standards to survive the elements, it was something I knew all along but failed to heed due to my to-a-fault sunny optimism: If something can go wrong, it will. +

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Photo: Martin Biskoping