

Introduction to Geocaching for Scouters

We have written a supplemental training that is available on the BSA website. It has been approved by the Boy Scout Training Task Force and is available at the National Scouting website. This is a combination of hands-on/lecture format and will be complete with powerpoint material and handouts. I would be interested in having more pilots done with this material.

If you would like to try this in your district or council, go to the National Scouting Website to find the supplemental training, Geocaching to Promote Scouting

Geocaching Rules and Etiquette for hiding and seeking caches

Rule #1: Safety

Boys are likely to be excited about finding the cache and may or may not use common sense to get to it, so take care that you don't place a cache that in any way leads them into a dangerous situation. This includes the following obvious NO-NOs:

1. Stay far away from road traffic and railroad crossings
2. Don't place a cache higher than 6 feet nor require any dangerous climbing to reach it
3. Don't require Scouts to swim to reach the cache
4. Public caches are often magnetic containers stuck onto electrical switch boxes. Common sense says to avoid these as well!
5. Always enforce the Buddy system
- 6.

Rule #2: Respect the environment

1. NEVER bury a cache in the ground (you can place a pile of sticks or rocks over it however)
2. Avoid sensitive ecosystems – remember that they will make a beeline for it, and trample vegetation in the vicinity. Place caches so that they can be reached by existing trail access.
3. Don't place caches in archeological or historic sites
4. Don't deface any object, natural or manmade
5. Many geocachers hide small caches in light post bases, sprinkler heads, etc. These should be avoided so the boys don't tear things apart looking for a "fake" one.

Rule#3: Respect private property

1. GET PERMISSION from land managers to use parks, Scout camps, etc for your events
2. Do not put caches on National Park land, National Wildlife refuges, etc. These are currently not allowed. Local laws vary so check with any relevant agency before placing caches
3. Caches in or near military installations are not allowed
4. Caches are not allowed on elementary and secondary school property

5. Avoid sites that could be deemed potential or possible targets for terrorist attacks. These include but are not limited to highway bridges, dams, government buildings, and airports.

Rule#4: Be a positive ambassador for Scouting

As with all else we do, cache using the Scout Oath and Law.

Cache to Eagle Guidelines

If you set up any Cache to Eagle sites, there are special guidelines you should use;

1. ALL the above guidelines must be followed
2. You cannot ask for donations or advertise for any specific unit and/or Council
3. Eagle project sites should be in good repair and represent a significant effort. A project like repainting a building may begin to look “weathered” after a short time and should be avoided..
4. TALK TO YOUR REVIEWER. Communication is always the key to success.

What is the Cache to Eagle® Series?

What could be a more natural partnership – Scouting and geocaching! Both programs love and support the outdoors, and both get us all away from the TV and video games!

This series of caches highlight another component of Scouting: Service. All Scouts performs many hours of community service, from collecting food each year to a myriad of conservation projects. This series highlights just a few of these.

Scouting provides a tremendous number of service hours to the community. If you took the total hours of community service conducted by the Marin Council in one year and assigned that to a single individual working 40 hours a week...how long would it take them to accomplish the same amount of service? Answer: 18.95 years!

The first 12 have been set in Marin County, California, and there will be more to come. Scouts and Scouters– if you have an interest in setting a “Cache to Eagle” series in their own council area Download the Cache to Eagle Guidelines and visit some of the Cache to Eagle caches already up and running! Marin Council's Cache to Eagle Series Bookmark

If you would like to see other Cache to Eagle series visit the Cache to Eagle Database at the Geoscouting Forum. Once you get your Cache to Eagle Series in place, please post the information and links in the Cache to Eagle Database! This will be our growing concise list of Cache to Eagle series. Thank you!

Guidelines

Download the guidelines for setting a Cache to Eagle Series of caches here

To get the patch for free, you need to visit enough of the Marin Council Cache to Eagle sites to complete the entire Scout Law. They are not in order, and you must tell me which cache has which law. The patch is also available for a donation at any time (I need to reimburse our council for the expense) – send an email and your patch is on it's way. Contact Us

Get your patch!

If you have earned the patch by finding all of the Marin Council Cache to Eagle caches and can correctly associate the points of the Scout Law to the correct caches, then send us a note with your Cache numbers and points of the Scout Law included. You should also include your mailing address and phone number and your patch will be on it's way. Contact Us

This offer is for the Marin Council Cache to Eagle Series only. If you are interested in providing patches for your own Cache to Eagle series contact us about purchasing your own set of patches.

Or if you would just like to purchase a patch, send us an email with the quantity you wish and a PayPal invoice will be emailed to you. If you want to purchase Cache to Eagle Geocoins along with your patches, just include the quantity and finish of the coins you wish in your note to us and we will include them in the invoice. Contact Us

Cache to Eagle patch:



Geocouting Games

Introductions

Sample Geocache game for a troop meeting or recruiting event

This is a good game to play with new teams. It both introduces inexperienced players to the sport and demonstrates how you can use geocaching games that have a hidden purpose – in this case team introductions

Ask the boys how many are familiar with geocaching. Divide the teams so that they have a mix of experienced and inexperienced users. It is good if they do not know all the members on their team – but do NOT do introductions yet. That will be a part of the game.

Note: Before the course, the instructors must find easy hiding spots for 3 caches. All waypoints should be pre-programmed into the GPS units, as this session does not focus on programming the GPSr, but only on finding a cache. These can be as simple as having the cache sitting on the tire of a car in the parking lot – the point is simply to have the participants have a chance to follow the arrow of the GPS unit and experience the thrill of the find.

Explain the challenge

Tell them that the goal is to find 3 geocaches.

Go outside of the building to the parking lot or other suitable spot where there is good GPS reception. It must be close by to stay in the timeframe of the session – the outside portion of the game can only take about 15 minutes. Have each team look at their GPS unit – it should be pre-activated so that it has acquired the satellites. Explain the initial screen, and point out that the GPSr has tracked the satellite signals. Then the staff member illustrates how to go to the “Find Waypoint” screen to bring up the compass arrow.

As the team prepares to begin hunting, explain the team rules as follows;

1. All team members should “STAY TOGETHER”
2. Do not RUN – WALK (no need to get injured)
3. Do not tread on things you shouldn’t (gardens, private property, etc)
4. Attempt to involve everyone on the team. Everyone should have a job
5. Each team should have a Troop Guide (staff member) to chaperone the team. Do not ditch the troop guide.

Have the teams go outside and assemble with their teams in an open area near the training facility. Once assembled, get everyone’s attention.

Perform a very brief explanation of GPS operation with everyone. Explain that the GPSr is tracking the signals of the satellites that are currently in the horizon sky. As each GPSr establishes signal connection with at least 3 satellites the screen should say “Ready to Navigate”. Explain that the Accuracy shown will change depending on the number of satellites

tracked and the amount of interference of the signals, such as traveling in dense trees may degrade the signal decreasing the accuracy of the GPSr.

Have all team proceed to the first waypoint 001, and meet them there. (The teams should then begin traveling in the direction the GPSr indicates.)

Waypoint One:

The first cache should contain nametags of the participant, which are color coded. In case participants have not pre-registered, have blank nametags and a pen in the cache in addition to the pre-done nametags. Have them introduce themselves to their team as they put on their nametags.

Once everyone has located the first cache they should have a good feel how this game works. Show everyone the cache container so everyone knows what he or she is looking for. Make the hide simple as this is a learning exercise.

They simply need to find 2 more caches and do what it says to do at the site. An experienced adult or youth member will accompany the team to help them change the GPS coordinates to the next waypoint. There is not time for teaching how to program the GPS unit in this training but this will be covered in detail at the later, fully hands-on outdoor training session.

Entertain any questions and tell them they need to be back at the meeting room in 15 minutes from now. The entire team needs to be present at the classroom to be considered on time.

Waypoints Two and Three:

Send them out to find two more easy caches. The second cache will have a small trinket or gift – like an inexpensive pin or CITO container. Everyone gets a prize. The third cache will have “getting to know me” questions. These are easy ice-breaker questions, like “Find someone who is an Eagle Scout” or “Find someone who has been to Philmont.” Questions are also color coded. They simply take a question, and then return to the classroom.

Following the exercise, have the participants return to the meeting area.

As they reassemble, have them introduce themselves to another Scouter and ask the question they got from the 3rd cache. If the question is on yellow paper, they need to ask someone with a yellow nametag. Take 2-3 minutes to do this. At the end of this exercise, they should have had some fun, and gotten to know a little about the rest of the participants.

The hidden point of the game is to have the team get to know each other, and to provide a small gift (such as a Cache in Trash Out token) that will support the material to come later in the course. This point will be debriefed when they reassemble.

Ask the participants if they had fun. Ask if they learned anything. See if they come up with the fact that they accomplished the introduction and ice-breaker portion of the training in a novel manner. If they don't, explain what you did. Tell them that they will understand the significance of the gift (CITO container) shortly when we explain Geocaching and Service ideas.

You may want to have prizes for games or events. A low cost recognition item is a simple "cache in, cache out" container – these are low cost (requires only a film canister with a label and a plastic trash bag) and yet supports the Leave No Trace aspect of Geocaching, and can make a great, easily personalized gift for participants. This can supplement the prize they picked up in the second cache during the game.

Remember – Scout troops are Boy led - Share your knowledge with the Troop Youth Leadership, and turns the planning and implementation of events over to them to the greatest degree possible.

Feel free to mail info@geoscouting.com if you have any questions

Resources for Geoscouting

Event Planning

Many times we need to plan events that will feature some aspect of Geoscouting. Event Planning can be a daunting task but with the right information it can be made simple and enjoyable.

Scouting.org provides a Supplemental Training that highlights how to [Plan and Conduct a Safe Scouting Outing](#). This is a good resource to plan an event. Many of the steps and advice apply to a Geoscouting event.

As always you should refer to the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#) whenever planning.

When planning a Geoscouting event that includes the Geocaching community use this [Event Handbook](#) by IceCreamMan aka David Klug. ICM is an active cacher from the Jacksonville, FL area and is a [NEFGA](#) member. This reference is a nicely laid out handbook for those wishing to plan a Geocaching Event. [Read more >](#)

For more on Geocaching events look to the [Geocaching.com](#) website for how to submit an event for approval. [Read more >](#)

Also, if you want to attend an Geocaching event in your area look to the [Event Calendar](#) on [Geocaching.com](#).



CITO Event Planning

Anyone can organize and run a great Cache In Trash Out event. It can be small, for just your unit or you can post your event on geocaching.com for all your neighborhood geocachers to join as well.

In April of 2006 we organized a very successful [Marin Council CITO event](#).

Follow this [Event Link](#) to see the event description and the logs that were posted on geocaching.com.

To see the steps taken to plan this event and a photo gallery of the event go [here>](#)

For information on Cache In Trash Out go to Groundspeak's Cache In Trash Out website; visit CacheInTrashOut.org