

# GEOCACHING for the BOY SCOUT PROGRAM



How to use geocaching to promote Boy Scout  
Recruiting, Retention and Public Relations

by  
Mary E. Stevens, PhD



# GeoScouting®: Geocaching for the Boy Scout Program



*“Look well, and even though you have looked,  
look again.”*

**- Baden-Powell**

”

**Mary E. Stevens, PhD**

Copyright © 2010 Mary E. Stevens, PhD.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the author, except for inclusion of brief quotations in a review. The word marks “GeoScouting®” and “Cache to Eagle®” are registered trademarks of Mary E. Stevens. These marks may not be used without written permission from Mary E. Stevens.

Inquiries should be addressed to:

Mary E. Stevens, PhD

Email: [GeoScouting@gmail.com](mailto:GeoScouting@gmail.com)

Or visit our website at [www.GeoScouting.com](http://www.GeoScouting.com)

Dr. Stevens is a long time Scout volunteer and is not a professional staff member of the Boy Scouts of America. BSA does not endorse this book as an official BSA product.

Permission to use logos and material from Geocaching.com was generously granted by Groundspeak. Any Trademarked names which may appear in this book are used in an editorial fashion to the benefit of the owner, and with no intention of infringement of the trademark.

The information in this book is distributed on an as is basis, without warranty. Although we have taken every precaution in the preparation of this material, the author does not have any liability to any person or entity with respect to loss or damage caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly from the information contained in this book.

ISBN 0-xxxxxxx-xx-xx

❖ Geocaching guidelines

- ✓ Guide for Finding Caches  
<http://www.geocaching.com/about/finding.aspx>
- ✓ Guide for Hiding Caches  
<http://www.geocaching.com/about/hiding.aspx>
- ✓ Guide for Posting Caches on Geocaching.com
- ✓ Guide for buying a GPS units  
<http://www.geocaching.com/about/buying.aspx>
- ✓ Glossary of Geocaching terms  
<http://www.geocaching.com/about/glossary.aspx>

## References and Useful Website links

### Books:

- ❖ [The Boy Scout Handbook](#)
- ❖ [The Boy Scout Fieldbook](#)
- ❖ [National Youth Leadership Training Syllabus](#)
- ❖ [Cub Scout Fun with GPS](#)
- ❖ [The Tiger Cub Handbook](#)
- ❖ [The Wolf Handbook](#)
- ❖ [The Bear Handbook](#)
- ❖ [The Webelos Handbook](#)
- ❖ [Geocaching to Promote Scouting](#)
- ❖ [The Complete Idiot's Guide to Geocaching](#)
- ❖ [Geocaching for Dummies](#)

### Websites

- ❖ [General resource information](#)  
[www.GeoScouting.com](http://www.GeoScouting.com)
- ❖ [The Geocacher's creed](http://geocreed.info/) <http://geocreed.info/>
- ❖ [Geocaching description](http://www.geocaching.com/faq/)  
<http://www.geocaching.com/faq/>
- ❖ [Cache In Trash Out](http://www.cacheintrashout.org/)  
<http://www.cacheintrashout.org/>
- ❖ <http://www.bsafielbook.org/>
- ❖ [Leave No Trace](http://www.LNT.org) [www.LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org)

## About the Author

Dr. Mary Stevens has been involved in Scouting since 1986. She has been a Tiger Cub Leader, Den Leader and Webelos Den Leader before moving into Boy Scouting and Venturing (where she is currently a Scoutmaster and Crew Advisor). She is on the Marin Council Executive Committee and Board, and has served as Vice President of Program for 5 years as well as her current role of Vice President of Membership and Relationships.

On the National level, Mary brought the sport of geocaching to the forefront. She began by proposing and then creating the Geocaching Event at the 2005 Boy Scout Jamboree, and expanded this in the 2007 World Scout Jamboree. She has written a National Supplemental Training module on geocaching (see [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org)), and developed adult geocaching courses for the National BSA Training Center at Philmont and the Florida Sea Base as well as a session at the National office for incoming BSA professionals. She was on the National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience and led the Philmont Leadership Challenge design team, creating the geocaching module for these courses. She helped create the requirements for and is writing the Geocaching Merit Badge. She and her husband travel around the country helping other councils bring the value of GeoScouting into their program.

As a scientist, Mary worked in education for 16 years, including developing a genetic engineering course for middle school students before moving to an executive role at Bayer Corporation. Now retired, she is an avid geocacher with thousands of “finds”. She continues to geocache under the handle “mousewiz” along with her husband Brad (“scoutboy”). She and Brad have created the website [www.GeoScouting.com](http://www.GeoScouting.com) to be used as a global resource by Scouts and Scouters from any program area.

# Forward

Welcome to geocaching with your Scouts!

Geocaching is a wonderful sport for Scouts. It takes them outdoors, on adventures and they get to find prizes. But it is so much more than that!

You can use this simple sport in so many ways to help your Scout, his patrol and troop, the public AND to help the Boy Scouts of America. Simply going outside to find publically hidden geocaches is a healthy alternative to TV and video games, and many public caches have a great deal of interesting background information and/or beautiful locations to discover.

But we take this further – to GeoScouting®. GeoScouting is simply Geocaching combined with Scouting to showcase the value of both programs. For example, if we highlight the sport of using Geocaching with Scouts for service, to help the youth advance, or to help recruit other youth to join your great troop or patrol, that GeoScouting® is at its best.

This book is not designed to be the ultimate geocaching guide. There are many great sources of information on that topic and we don't need to reinvent the wheel. The purpose of this book is to introduce ways to use the sport for Scouting. We have some general information to help the beginning Scout or Scouter get acquainted with geocaching but the main value is in the Scout related ideas and games.

Please use this book to do your best to get kids outside, to improve your patrol or troop, to help others, and most of all to have FUN!

Mary Stevens aka “mousewiz”

months. After setting up the geocache, with your parent's permission, follow the logs online for 30 days and share them with your counselor.

- d. Explain what Cache in Trash Out (CITO) means, and describe how you have practiced CITO at public geocaches or at a CITO event. Then, either create CITO containers to leave at public caches, or host a CITO event for your unit or for the public.
9. Plan a geohunt for a youth group such as your troop or a neighboring pack, at school, or your place of worship. Choose a theme, set up a course with at least four waypoints, teach the players how to use a GPS unit, and play the game. Tell your counselor about your experience, and share the materials you used and developed for this event.

to locate public geocaches in your area. Share the posted information about three of those geocaches with your counselor. Then, pick one of the three and find the cache.

\*To fulfill this requirement, you will need to set up a free user account with [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com). Ask your parent for permission and help before doing so.

8. Do ONE of the following:
  - a. If a Cache to Eagle® series exists in your council, visit at least three of the locations in the series. Describe the projects that each cache you visit highlights, and explain how the Cache to Eagle® program helps share our Scouting service with the public.
  - b. Create a Scouting-related Travel Bug® that promotes one of the values of Scouting. "Release" your Travel Bug into a public geocache and, with your parent's permission, monitor its progress at [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) for 30 days. Keep a log, and share this with your counselor at the end of the 30-day period.
  - c. Set up and hide a public geocache, following the guidelines in the *Geocaching* merit badge pamphlet. Before doing so, share with your counselor a six-month maintenance plan for the geocache where you are personally responsible for the first three

## Table of Contents

<b>WHAT IS GEOCACHING?.....</b>	<b>1</b>
A BRIEF INTRODUCTION .....	2
WHAT IS GEOScoutING®? .....	4
THE 3 R'S OF GEOScoutING® .....	5
4TH R - RULES.....	6
LEAVE NO TRACE AND GEOCACHING.....	7
GEOCACHING RULES IN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE.....	11
<b>GEOCACHING AND GPS.....</b>	<b>15</b>
HOW DOES GPS WORK? .....	16
YOUR GPS UNIT: HOW TO USE IT .....	17
HOW TO TEACH GPS USE TO YOUR PATROL OR TROOP.....	21
HOW TO TEACH GPS USE TO CUB SCOUTS.....	22
<b>IMPORTANCE OF MAP AND COMPASS .....</b>	<b>25</b>
UTM.....	26
GOOGLE EARTH .....	32
<b>GEOCACHING AND THE INTERNET.....</b>	<b>34</b>
INTERNET SAFETY.....	34
GEOCACHING RELATED WEBSITES .....	35
GEOCACHING.COM .....	37
TRACKABLES .....	42
FORUMS.....	43
<b>HOW TO USE GEOCACHING FOR YOURSELF, YOUR PATROL AND YOUR TROOP.....</b>	<b>44</b>
ADVANCEMENT .....	45
RECRUITING, RETENTION AND MEMBERSHIP .....	51
PARTNERING WITH OTHER YOUTH SERVING ORGANIZATIONS.....	54
PUBLIC RELATIONS .....	56
GAMES FOR TROOP MEETINGS AND OUTINGS.....	61
SAMPLE PATROL AND TROOP ACTIVITIES .....	61
MAKING GEOCACHE CONTAINERS WITH GOOD CAMOUFLAGE (CAMO) .....	68
MAKE TRAVEL BUGS® AND SET THEM LOOSE.....	72
<b>WHAT'S NEXT? .....</b>	<b>74</b>
FUTURE NETWORKING AND RESOURCES – THE GEOScoutING.COM WEBSITE .....	74
BSA TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES.....	75



<b>APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>76</b>
SAMPLE GAMES AND ACTIVITIES.....	77
GPS GAMES FOR SCOUTING.....	77
SAMPLE GEOCACHE GAMES FOR A TROOP MEETING OR RECRUITING EVENT.	79
COMMONLY USED GEOCACHING TERMS: .....	98
REFERENCES AND USEFUL WEBSITE LINKS.....	108

geocaching: waypoint, log, cache, accuracy, difficulty and terrain ratings, attributes, trackable. Choose five additional terms to explain to your counselor.

4. Explain how the Global Positioning System (GPS) works. Then, using Scouting’s Teaching EDGE, demonstrate the use of a GPS unit to your counselor. Include marking and editing a waypoint, changing field functions, and changing the coordinate system in the unit.
5. Do the following:
  - a. Show you know how to use a map and compass and explain why this is important for geocaching.
  - b. Explain the similarities and differences between GPS navigation and standard map reading skills and describe the benefits of each.
  - c. Explain the UTM (Universal Transverse Mercator) system and how it differs from the latitude/longitude system used for public geocaches.
  - d. Show how to plot a UTM waypoint on a map. Compare the accuracy to that found with a GPS unit.
6. Describe the four steps to finding your first cache to your counselor. Then mark and edit a waypoint.
7. With your parent’s permission\*, go to [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com). Type in your zip code



## Geocaching Merit Badge Requirements

1. Do the following:
  - a. Explain to your counselor the most likely hazards you may encounter while participating in geocaching activities and what you should do to anticipate, help prevent, mitigate, and respond to these hazards.
  - b. Discuss first aid and prevention for the types of injuries or illnesses that could occur while participating in geocaching activities, including cuts, scrapes, snakebite, insect stings, tick bites, exposure to poisonous plants, heat and cold reactions (sunburn, heatstroke, heat exhaustion, hypothermia), and dehydration.
  - c. Discuss how to properly plan an activity that uses GPS, including using the buddy system, sharing your plan with others, and considering the weather, route, and proper attire.
2. Discuss the following with your counselor:
  - a. Why you should never bury a cache
  - b. How to use proper geocaching etiquette when hiding or seeking a cache, and how to properly hide, post, maintain, and dismantle a geocache
  - c. The principles of Leave No Trace as they apply to geocaching
3. Explain the following terms used in

## What is Geocaching?



Photos by  
Robert Tong

## **A Brief Introduction**

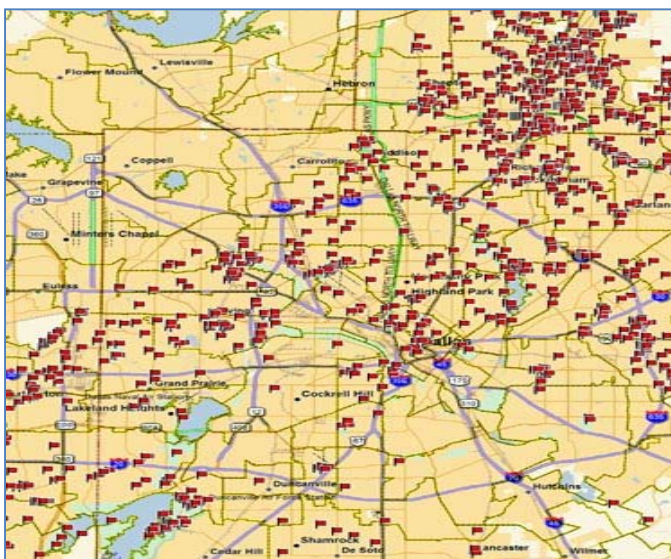
### **The History of Geocaching and GeoScouting®**

The word Geocache comes from the word “geo”, which means “earth” and “cache”, which means “a hiding place”. So Geocaching means a hiding place on the planet Earth – and you can find it using a GPS unit! A GPS unit is a small handheld tool that shows you where to go based on information it gets from satellites in space.



Think of a treasure hunt that uses your GPS unit to find the location of the prize or “cache”.

There are so many public geocaches hidden around where your troop and patrol meet, and there are probably some hidden in your neighborhood very close to where you live.



### **Travel bug®**

This is an item that travels from cache location to cache location. It has a trackable number written on a metal tag so that you can record on the geocaching.com website where you picked it up and where you dropped it off. Travel bugs often have a “mission” – like getting to a certain state, or visiting National parks.

### **UTM**

The "Universal Transverse Mercator" coordinate system. UTM uses grids overlaying specific areas of the Earth's surface and divides the Earth into 60 zones.

### **Virtual (cache)**

A virtual cache is a cache that has no container, but that exists in a form of a location that you visit, find out information and send that information to the cache owner to get credit for the find. These are no longer allowed as new caches but many still exist.

### **WAAS**

WAAS stands for Wide Area Augmentation System, and is a combination of satellites and ground stations that increase GPS accuracy.

### **Watch List**

A watch list is a list of users that are watching a specific travel bug or cache.

**Waypoint** – A waypoint is a reference point for a physical location on Earth. Waypoints are defined by a set of coordinates that typically include longitude, latitude and sometimes altitude.