GEOCACHING AUSTRALIA

SES Rats with Samantha Lee   Sienna Grace

National Caching News & Rantings

Welcome to the first Australian Geocaching Newsletter!

Geocaching is rapidly increasing in popularity in Australia, and it is hoped that this newsletter will improve the visibility of the sport.

Regular features will include cacher and cache profiles, news, product reviews, cache reports and more. If your state doesn't get a mention then please contribute something for the next edition!

National Approver

Australia now has its very own approver in the form of Embi (Mark England). Mark very generously gives up his time to approve each and every cache in Australia before it goes on GC.com (Thanks Mark!).

Having our own local approver with local caching knowledge is invaluable, as the Australian caching scene can often be very different from the US.

If you have an innovative new cache idea that needs approving or scheduling, Mark is the person to talk to. Check out his bio in the cacher profile section.

Forums

The Geocaching Australia forum at *www.geocaching.com.au/forum* is the best way to keep up to date with the latest happenings in the Australian Geocaching community. Over 200 members so far, and growing fast. The Aussie_Cachers Yahoo! group is still reasonably popular for those who prefer an email list format.

Geo-Babies!

Geo-Babies are being found in NSW caches everywhere!

Congrats to:
SES rats on Geo-baby Samantha Lee
Red Dwarf on Geo-baby Sienna Grace
GeoMonkeys Brad & Narelle on Geo-Baby Anastasia

UHF Geocaching channel

With UHF transceivers becoming increasingly common as a caching tool, a few cachers on the forum have settled on channel 15 as the default cachers channel. This sounds good to us, so keep those radios on and listen out for some caching traffic.

Muggles

A new term: Muggle(s), has been coined for non-geocaching "civilians" encountered in the course of caching. The term comes from the Harry Potter series, and means "non-magical" people.

CacheMonkey

CacheMonkey is one of the most popular software tools within the Australian caching community. GeoMonkey Brad, who is the author of CacheMonkey, has found little time to cache lately, let alone keep up with all the feature requests. As such, he is now looking at open-sourcing the program to others to continue development of this important program. Anyone with appropriate Java and programming skills who would like to take this over, please contact Brad at *BMcGill@copyright.com.au*

CacheMonkey version 2 now allows importing of GPX files for those with premium memberships. Grab CacheMonkey from *www.geomonkeys.com*, with the latest update being available on the forum.

PAPERLESS CACHING

Sick and tired of having to print out each and every cache page? Not only does it waste trees, money, and time, its inconvenient and messy. Why not join the growing trend of Cachers who practice paperless Geocaching...

All you need is a portable computing device you can take with you while caching. The most popular are the handheld Palm device or Pocket PC. The Psion (Symbian) devices are also suitable, as is a regular notebook PC. With a portable computing device you can carry around every cache sheet for your area, state, country, or the entire planet if you so desire!

Don't have one of these technological wonders? Second hand and as-new refurbished Palm III devices can be bought on eBay for well under $100, so there is little excuse not to go paperless!

A Palm device is recommended, as they are generally the most rugged, offer the best battery life, and have the best software support available.

For a Palm device, the following is a highly flexible way to go paperless:
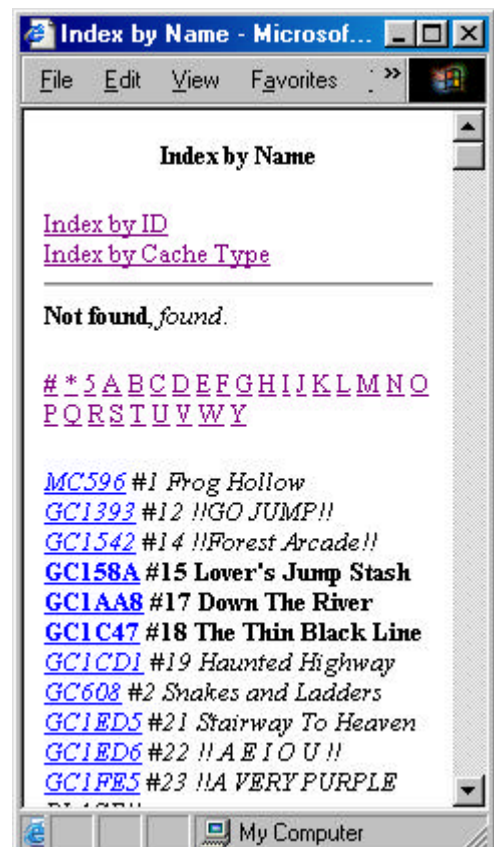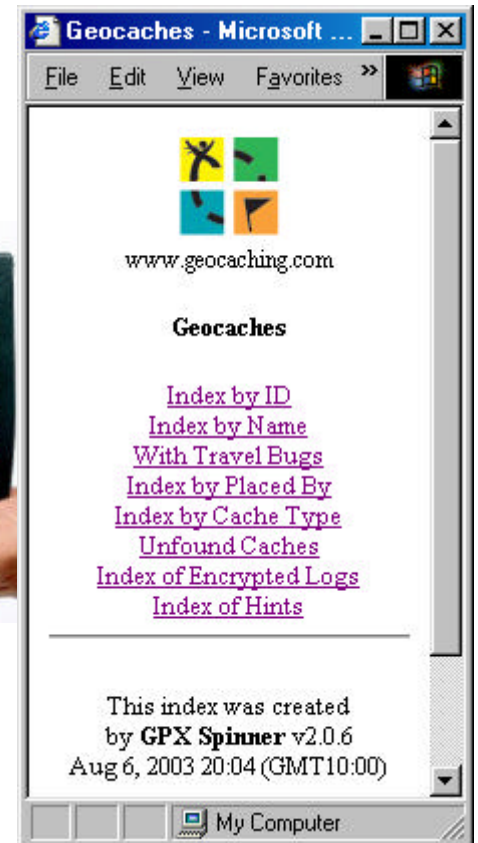
- Get GC.com Premium membership
- Download GPX files using Pocket Queries
- Use GPXspinner (www.gpxspinner.com) to generate HTML cache pages and cross-referenced index files
- Use iSiloX (www.isilox.com) to generate an iSilo file which you download to your Palm.
- Use iSilo (www.isilo.com) on your Palm to view the cache pages

A simpler method involves using the MobiPocket viewer, and downloading the MobiPocket file direct from your PocketQuery. MobiPocket files aren't as full-featured and easy to search as the ones generated by GPXspinner, but they are the simplest to download, which is a good start for the techno-challenged.

GPXspinner is the undisputed king of paperless caching. It can generate fully cross-referenced HTML files with every cache, hint, and the latest logs all only a few screen taps away. Not only that, but it can list all nearby caches as well, and it can tell you which ones you've found and haven't found.

Palm hardware requirements are modest. 2MB should be enough to hold a viewer like iSilo or MobiPoocket, and all the caches for your state. All of the caches for NSW for instance occupy a mere 900KB or so.

There are several other ways to go paperless, and some Cachers even download maps, waypoints and update/upload data with their mobile phone!

Operation Christmas Child

Caches for Children at Christmas!

Jo-Jo GeoMonkey came across a charity that delivers "shoe boxes" of goodies to under-privileged children across the world as a present at Christmas. These are children who don't know what it is like to receive Christmas or birthday presents and live in the most poverty stricken circumstances. The Samaritans Purse charity believes that giving a "shoe box" gift at Christmas is one way of lifting a child's spirits. They do not pretend that these gifts will fix the dire situation that these children live in.

It struck us that the recommended contents of these "shoe boxes" are very similar to the contents we all put in caches for Geocaching. So, we thought that you might like to know about the charity and rummage through your boxes of swap items to put together your own "shoe boxes" to contribute.

The boxes are literally old shoe boxes wrapped in quality Christmas wrapping paper. Filled with goodies that kids would love to have. The preferred contents of a shoe box are below, as there are a few things they don't like us to put in, for safety, and security reasons.

1. Something soft to cuddle – such as a small teddy bear or wooden or plastic doll.
2. Something to play with – such as a tennis ball, super-bounce balls or similar
3. Something to wear – such as t-shirts and shorts (shoe boxes from Australia go to outback aboriginal communities in Australia and other warm climate countries)
4. Something for hygiene – such as tooth paste and a tooth brush or soap (take items out of their boxes/wrapping and, for soap, place in a zip-lock plastic bag or similar so it doesn't smell-out the whole box)
5. Something to read – such as a picture book (avoid too many words and religious messages) or a small photo album with pictures of animals and places taken from magazines or post cards.
6. Something to write with – such as crayons and a notepad (if you send pencils, make sure you pack a pencil sharpener. Similarly, if you send anything requiring batteries, make sure you send some spare batteries).
7. Something to eat – such as lolly-pops or hard boiled lollies, bubblegum. (Send in a zip lock plastic bag to avoid leaking or melting into other content. No glass jars, but tins are fine.)
8. A draw string carry bag or calico bag (Eco-team bag) for the kids to carry their toys in after the box has worn out.
9. Most importantly a donation of $7.00 in an envelope in the top of the box to go to the charity to assist with freight and handling.

There are also some very important things to avoid sending in a shoe box.

Do not send:
1. Second hand, or partially used items. (I guess this means a lot of our swaps may not be suitable!)
2. Shampoo, bubble-bath, liquid soap or similar (children may try to drink these, being unfamiliar with their purpose)
3. Playing cards (these are associated with the "West" and gambling and are frowned upon) Snap, Go-fish, Donkey or Matching cards style of games are fine.
4. Soft lollies or chocolates (these often melt while sitting for hours on hot tarmacs etc)
5. Glass of any sort or other fragile materials such as ceramic ornaments (the boxes go through some pretty rough handling and these items could easily break)
6. Medications (these may not be used properly and may be banned in particular countries)
7. Toys resembling military equipment; such as water pistols or toy tanks, knives etc (children have often lived through the traumas of wars, and do not need to be reminded.)
8. Religious materials (these are often banned in countries that the boxes are going to).

The boxes are being collected in early October from specified collection points. To get the full run down on how to put a "Caches for Kids" together, and information on collection points go to the Samaritans Purse website and click on the "Operation Christmas Child" link. www.samaritanspurse.org or Phone: 1-800-684-300.

There will also be a discussion thread on the Australian Geocaching forums page started soon.

PRODUCT REVIEW
The Nightstar & Forever-light torches.

Review by: Pesky!

Product type: Torches that never require batteries, or a recharge.
My Rating: 9/10
Price range: Under $100
Temperature: Operation -40 Celsius to + 55 Celsius
Submersion: Operational to a depth of 131m
Chemical resistance: operational after 3 days in sea water, alcohol, Methanol, Bleach, Acetic acid, Also Motor oil, diesel, and gasoline (black/yellow housing only).
Weight: 308g
WEB: www.nightstar1.com

Imagine this:
You are on the last leg of a weekend-long, Micro-multi-puzzle geocache, the sun is setting, and you know you are the first finders. The prize will be yours if you can only get to this final location. The sun is setting, and you only have a few hundred meters to go. Do you risk it, or push on? Push on…
Just as you reach "ground zero" of the cache location… its too dark to see, you reach for your torch and flick the switch… nothing, now what? You don't have any spare batteries, it's a 20 minute stumble back to the car for more, and the cache is so close you can almost taste it!
Lucky for you, you have one of the new Nightstar no-battery torches, and after giving the torch a few seconds of shaking, you illuminate the cache location with a bright, strong beam. You are able to log your find. Oh no, it starting to rain! No matter, the Nightstar is a fully sealed unit that is water-proof to depths of 100 meters.
On your return to your car, you trip on the wet rocks, and your torch slips from your hands. This would normally be the end of the torch, but not the Nightstar, it is made of poly carbonate plastic, and has been tested with repeated drops. Its LED bulb is rated at 100,000 hours, and is virtually indestructible. The torches have been left soaking in solvents, and acids for up to 3 days without damage. Your cache hunt will be successful, and Safe with a Nightstar, or Forever-light in your caching kit.

These torches are revolutionary. They use a capacitor to store their charge rather than a battery, and you charge the torch with a gentle shaking motion that moves the charging magnet through the faraday coil. It takes only about 90-100 shakes, or about 30 seconds. No dynamos to turn or squeeze no worry about solar cells, or battery recharges and definitely no purchasing and carrying hundreds of batteries. The Nightstar, clearly the best torch of this type in the range, is now 150% brighter, can give off a bright light for about 10 min., then a more soft, but still useable light for another 10 minutes before it needs a recharge. I found that after a couple of recharges, this 'Bright' time is actually longer, and noticed that the bulb was still

glowing after 3 or 4 hours of being left switched on, although it was not useful illumination. The technical blurb is as follows:

They also have a 5 year world wide replacement warranty.
The Nightstar torches are available in 3 styles, "Clear", a see through style for those who like to show off how their new toy works, "Military" black for those spec-ops, and deep cover cache hunts and "marine" yellow, suitable for emergency, maritime and trade work, as they are highly visible, and resistant to salt and chemicals.

The baby brother of the Nightstar is the Forever-light micro. It has a time between recharges of about 5 minutes. It makes up for its down fall in illumination time by being light and compact it is only 17cm long, and weighs in at around 150g. It works on the same principal as the Nightstar and is perfect for finding a cache at night, or filling in the log book for example.

Perfect for keeping in the glove box of your car, in the fuse box, or first aid kit, in the tool kit, backpack, kids rooms, aged care, and just about any where. These torches will work, first time every time, even after years of neglect.

Although they are fairly expensive, they are ecologically sound, and over their lifetime will pay for themselves in the savings of not purchasing replacement batteries.

For further information and orders, you can E-mail: hrtech@iinet.net.au or Phone 02- 43420008 (BH)

CACHER PROFILES

Name: Team GeoMonkeys

State: NSW

Website:
www.geomonkeys.com

Team members:
- Grant(Pesky! GeoMonkey Prime)(See no evil)
- Joanne. (Jo-jo) (Sweetpea 5/9 th of the way!)
- Bradley (Mulch) (hear no evil)
- Narelle
- Anastasia   1 Month and a few days Old
- Scott (Scooter) (speak no evil)
- Meredith ('dith)
- Samuel   (toot! toot!) chugga chugga 3.5 y.o
- Eloise (Elle') 7 months old.

3 brothers, their wives, and families.
When you run GeoMonkeyss through an anagram server you get "oh My geek sons" (extra 's' added to make it funnier)

Occupation(s): All 3 of the Monkey boys, are IT Geex. Jo-Jo is a technical writer, Meredith is trained as a teacher, and Narelle is a trained Librarian. The kids... well they're just a blessing (GeoMonkeys the Next Gen!)

Interests other than caching:
Peskys list of interests is too long to publish, he collects hobbies as a hobby. Metal detecting, 4x4 driving, camping, and exploring the waterways via paddle-ski are his current favourites.

Brad is pretty much an I.T. guy, loves his newborn Anastasia, and is spending a lot of time with her at the moment. He also has an X-box with more mods and upgrades than I've ever seen.

Scott has a landcruiser, and spends many weekends out and about with his 4x4 club. With 2 small children, his other hobby is changing, feeding, burping, and babies.

Trade mark and signature items:
By now most Sydney teams have seen our trade mark rubber stamp. We use it to log as many of the log books as it will fit into. Our signature item is our "Barrel-o-Monkeys" monkey that we leave in every cache we find. It wasn't till recently (12-monkies) that we discovered some other team was picking them up behind us *i!*

How you got your name:
Pesky wasn't much older than 2 y.o. when my first sentence was "look I a Monkey!", followed by a fall from the lower branches of a tree. As we three brothers grew up together, we were often called Cheeky Monkeys. So it was kind of easy to choose a name. 'Geo-' for Geocaching, and 'monkeys' for obvious reasons.

Started caching:
My (Pesky) first cache was the only one in Sydney at the time, "lane cove", that was back in April 2001. before geocaching.com even existed I think. I found the cache posted on an original web page. My brothers where soon recruited to assist in the cache hunts.

Number of Finds/Placed: 195/47

How you got your start in caching:
Found link to "lane cove" cache whilst searching for "GPS" in AltaVista. I was looking to buy a GPS to log positions of my Prospecting finds, and navigate the outback fossicking fields, when it popped up with GPS treasure hunt. I was hooked!

People you've introduced to caching:
My two brothers, and their families of course, then a few friends. Most importantly our Sisters' two boys, Jake and Lloyd - Team Geo-Genesis.

Caching tools:
1 Land cruiser 60 series (GEO-BOY), 1 Landcruiser 80 series, 3 or 4 other support vehicles, 2 Etrex Venture, 1 Garmin 12, 1 sit on Kayak (the Banana boat), 2 inflatable Dinghies, 2 IMB PC laptops, 1 Apple Mac laptop, 1 Silva compass, 1 sunto compass, 1 Australia geographic compass, 2 Kodak digital still cameras, 2 Sony Digital Video cameras, numerous torches, lanterns, recovery gear, backpacks, ropes, ladders, dive masks, flippers and snorkels, boogie boards, tape measures, pocket calculators, binoculars, screwdrivers, levers, a socket wrench kit, and a shifting spanner or two.

Favorite cache(s):
OWNED: 12-MONKIES, because it was fun to set up, and it's difficult. 'Barrel of GeoMonkeys I', as it was my

first ever cache placement, right out side my apartment window at the time.
Visited: hard to say, the Achilles virus cache was fun, as it kept us busy for a few days and nights. Also includes Iliad.
All the event caches have been great too.

Memorable caching experience(s):
Ideologies Achilles cache!
taking 5 attempts to find 'lane cove'
(well it was my first ever cache hunt!)

Worst caching experience(s):
Ideologies Achilles cache.
Retrieving the alien from Shark island.

Name: Embi
State: Vic
Team members: Mark
Occupation: Chef

Interests other than caching:
Training the little monster Trex

Trade mark and signature items:
Signature item is the embi geocaching cd-rom. A self running flash movie explaining geocaching to the muggles. Look out for ver 2 very shortly.

How you got your name:
Long story. It's in the forums some where.

Started caching: 21th Aug 2001

Number of Finds/Placed: 119/20

How you got your start in caching:
Was using wap on a new mobile phone and came across a site of the day link...it was geocaching.com Bought my gps the next day. The rest is history.

People you've introduced to caching:
Active members include burnie, stumpyspud, and others who go along for the ride occasionally.

Caching tools:
etrex, Palm Vx with camera, Uniden two way radio stuck on Ch 15, and the new weapon Trex the Kelpie X blue heeler.

Favourite cache(s):
Australia's Highest and the two on French Island.

Memorable caching experience(s):
Hiking in snow loaded with camping gear climbing hour after hour wearing snow shoes. Setting up a base camp and then hiking the rest of the way to be first to find Australia's Highest. The view was just incredible.

Worst caching experience(s):
Finding my own caches trashed.

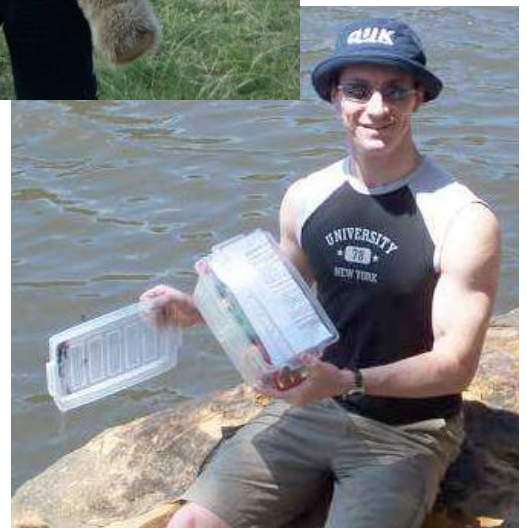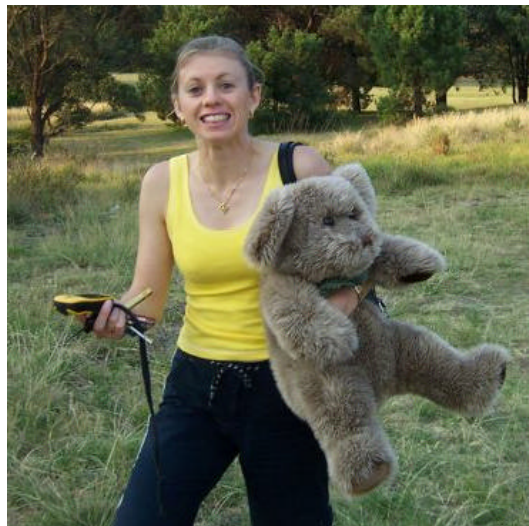

Name: EcoTeam

State: NSW

Team members:
David (EcoDave)
Nicole (EcoNic)
Milton the caching bear!

Web Site:
www.alternatezone.com

Occupation(s):
David is an electronics designer and author. Nicole is an environmental scientist with Sydney Water

Interests other than caching:
Canyoning, abseiling, bushwalking and mountain biking to name a few. We are both gym junkies too.

Trade mark and signature items:
Our EcoTeam calico shopping bag.

How you got your name:
It was easy with Nicole being the ultimate tree hugger!

Started caching: Aug 5th, 2001

Number of Finds/Placed: 141 / 10

How you got your start in caching:
Read a few magazine articles over the years (BGC = before gc.com) and it sounded interesting, but didn't have a GPS receiver at the time. Got a GPS for canyoning one day and the Silicon Chip GC article came out just after which renewed my interest. Then we happened to meet Hyper from TeamChaos, who told us all about it as well. Our first cache was Strange Items, and we ran into GeoMonkey Brad there and had to endure him watching us hunt our first cache from the cliff above!

People you've introduced to caching:
Bushrats & Zijerfex.

Caching tools:
Standard eTrex, cheap compass, Uniden UH-040 transceivers, various torches, various swiss army knives and multi-tools, micro tape recorder (handy for certain caches!), Tasco 12x25 compact binoculars, Kodak DX3600 digital camera, flexible bush tripod, and various other nick-knacks. Nicoles RAV4 comes in handy.

Software/Hardware Tools: GeoMap, GPXspinner, CacheMonkey, OziExplorer. Palm IIIXE, Psion 5, PC Laptop.

Favourite cache(s):
Get Smart, Obscured by Clouds, Play it Again Sam, Haunted Highway, Sand on Track, Hassans Walls to name a few...
Our own MacGyver cache - we really enjoyed working on a themed cache.

Memorable caching experience(s):
- Having Blocko & Badger place the Claustrophobia cache right above our heads in Claustral canyon!
- In Get Smart when the................. and we really felt like secret agents!
- Achillies, when we had no real idea what multi-waypoint caches were, or that waypoints could be hidden like that...
- After an 8 cache frenzy, beating Zijerfex to the Happily Ever After cache by 20minutes.

- The Division Bell in a severe lightning storm
- The cache events are always great fun.

Worst caching experience:
Writing off the brand new EcoMobile while caching up the coast (thumbs down to bull bars, thumbs up to insurance).

EcoNic Wondering what she'll wear to the next cache event...

NSW CACHING

NSW Feature Caches:

This issue we will take a look at some excellent older caches that have not been found in a while.

Obscured by Clouds by *Team Chaos*

If you are after a bit of an adventure with some gobsmacking views thrown in, then Obscured by Clouds should be at the top of your list. It hasn't been done for a long while, so why not be the first the re-find this superb cache.

Set in the lower part of the magnificent Wollemi National Park, just north of the ZigZag Railway and Lithgow, about 2 hours drive out of the middle of Sydney. It is accesible by 2WD cache mobiles along the famous Glow Worm Tunnel road, which is unsealed and a bit rough in places. Just don't take your brand new car!

Navigation to find the way in can be a bit of a challenge, but it's fairly obvious in the end. Make sure you take the various topo maps.

There is a lot of scrambling over magnificent pagoda rock formations, and the ending is, well, you'll just have to find out for yourself! Take a look at EcoNic in the photo, need we say more?

Take a day out to do this one, and a couple of other caches in the area, you won't be disappointed.

Play It Again Sam by *The Odlids*

Will you need all this caching equipment?

This cache, set in the Sutherland Shire, caused quite a deal of excitement when it was released. The intriguing and innovative puzzles inviting everyone with a sense of curiosity. There is an advantage to be had for the more technically minded cachers, but the cache can be solved by anyone with some research skills and patience. In fact, if you are clever enough, you can solve a good part of the cache from the comfort of your Internet machine.

Not too many people have cracked this innovative and devilishly clever cache, so why not give it go this weekend?

ZijerPhil - *What are we supposed to do with this waypoint decoder?*

Get Smart! by *Ideology*

Has there ever been a more hyped cache in Australian Geocaching history? With some major prizes on offer, Get Smart was a hit the minute it came online.

Craftily conceived by those enigmatic urban caching specilists, Ideology. With you as a secret agent, Get Smart! promises you'll face danger at every turn, and loving it!

A fully themed cache based on the Get Smart TV series, this cache takes Geocaching to an entirely new level you won't believe. We can't tell you how, that would spoil the surprise ending, suffice it to say that Get Smart is a very different geocaching experience. You really will feel like a secret agent!

Is it action and adventure you want? While doing Get Smart!, some cachers have been threatened with arrest, solicited help from overseas code breaking experts, had to steal cache waypoints back from enemy agents, and lurked around dark alley ways and abandoned car parks late at night. And that's only some of the events we can mention. You'll find out all on the secret winners page.

Do you have what it takes to be part of the exclusive club of secret agents who know the secret to Get Smart! ?

Footnote: Later waypoints for Get Smart are currently off-line, we hope they will be back online soon.

Happily Ever After by *Bear_Left*

Happily Ever After is an innovative new cache by the Bear_Left team as a farewell gift to NSW cachers, before they head on off to New Zealand.
They offered some very generous prizes, like a dinner for two and a Paddy Pallin gift voucher.

The theme of the cache is based on Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The idea being that 8 caching teams (Snow White + the Seven Dwarfs) each hide a cache which contains a code card. You have to find all 8 caches before you can claim the Happily Ever After cache. The great thing about this cache is that 8 excellent caches were all released simultaneously. Those who volunteered to place a cache had the advantage of a one dwarf head start.

Midnight on July 4th was the chosen date, and that started a flurry of caching activity that weekend. The following weekend it was announced that Bushrats had claimed first prize after some epic day and night caching.

After 3 weeks, a closely fought battle between EcoTeam & Zijerfex ensured for second and third place, with EcoTeam emerging victorious by a mere 20 minutes!

Well done to Bear_Left and all the caching teams involved. We are sure that Bear_Left will bring some innovative caching ideas to the NZ caching scene.

Claustrophobia by Blocko & Badger

Claustrophobia is perhaps Australia's most technically challenging and rewarding cache.

Set within Claustral Canyon, one of the most breathtaking sandstone slot canyons in the world, lies a cache that requires canyoning, abseiling and rock climbing skills. An 8-10 hour journey in freezing water, a 500m descent into a canyon with no way back, 3 spectacular abseils into the "Black Hole of Calcutta", and a 500m ascent back out mean that your work is well and truly cut out for you!

With towering shear vertical fern and moss lined walls for more than a km, swims through deep dark tunnels, breathtaking abseils into swirling pools of water, and boulder scrambling like you've never seen before, Claustrophobia certainly is worth a visit if you have the skills, equipment and experience. Just being in this magical place is reward itself.

Claustral Canyon, with Blocko & Badger (can you spot them?) being dwarfed by the massive fern lined sandstone walls. (Photo by Matt.S)

CACHING PHOTO GALLERY

Clockwise from top left: **1.**EcoNic at *Barrenjoey*. **2.**EcoNic, ZijerJel, ZijerPhil at *Sand on Track*. **3.**KarmicKev (SA), GeoCoopers (SA), LtDan (UK) in the Flinders. **4.**SwampGecko, BearLeft, Capt'Chaos at a caching dinner. **5.**EcoDave - Caching in the Clouds at *Hassan's Walls*. **6.**EcoDave at an unusual *Turtle Nest* waypoint.