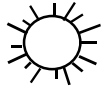


Radio Amateur News & Views

The Official Journal of the Radio Amateurs of Northern Vermont

August 2000

Vol. 10 No. 8



SUMMER HAM RADIO FUN!

THE RANV SUMMER PICNIC

Join Us For Fun Times on August 5th

The amateur radio event of the summer season – the RANV Summer Picnic, will take place Saturday, August 5th at Knight's Point State Park in North Hero. The early birds start arriving around 11am and picnic goers have been known to hang out until 5 or 6pm.

There are a lot of activities which go on at the picnic. First and foremost is **EATING**. Bring something to grill or otherwise consume. RANV will supply the charcoal for the grills and soda to wash it down. In addition to eating, another important activity will be socializing and the telling of tall DX tales. RANV is extending an invitation to all area radio clubs, so there will be lots of folks to socialize with.

Of course, this just wouldn't be an amateur radio event without a radio or two. RANV's special event station W1NVT will be on the air from rare Grand Isle County. Operation on the County Hunter's Net and the 10-10 Contest have been popular on-the-air activities. Bring your radio for extra fun. We'll have some dipoles and delta loops hanging out of the trees to hook on to.

A new activity this year is a fox hunt. A transmitter (or two) will be hidden somewhere in the park. Sometime after lunch, we'll start the hunt and see who can find them. Be sure to bring your hunting equipment!

There will even be activities for normal people. These include swimming, paddleboats, volleyball, hiking and other similar activities. Be sure to bring the appropriate attire and equipment.

Also at the picnic will be the summer meeting of the Northern Vermont chapter of the *Yankee Clipper Contest Club* (YCCC). This is a wide area regional club of contesting enthusiasts. The meeting will last around 30-45 minutes and is an excellent opportunity to meet amateur operators who know a lot about building big stations and working a lot of DX

The Summer Picnic is a family event, so bring the family as well. Unfortunately, Knight's Point is a pet-free park, so leave Fido home.

To get to the park, take Route 2 to the Champlain Islands. There is a drawbridge which crosses from South Hero to North Hero island (*it is often open*). Just after the bridge, make a left into the park. Tell the attendant that you are with the radio club and we will pick up the admission.

We hope to see all of you at the RANV Summer Picnic!

RANV FOX HUNT

August 11th

Get your equipment out and sharpen your wits for our midsummer Fox Hunt, Friday, August 11th. The hunt will start at 6pm, an hour earlier than normal. The last few hunts have been running quite late and we want to keep most of the hunt in light or twilight if at all possible. Not only is it easier to find the Fox, it tends to be bit safer, too.

The Fox for this event will be none other than Mitch W1SJ. He plans to be located in a nasty place to find, so you better be prepared! Essentials are radio, various antennas, a good map and powerful flashlight (*particularly if you don't get there before 8:30*). Other things which might be useful, but may or may not be necessary are: binoculars, laser light, a machete, hip waders, rock climbing equipment, rope, mosquito netting and a GPS (*for when you get lost!*).

To participate, show up on the Bolton repeater, 145.15 at 6pm sharp. The Fox will take roll call at that time. You must check in to participate – this is a safety requirement. Then, switch to the input (144.55 MHz) and look for the fox. He will be located within the boundaries of Chittenden County, will have at least an S-1 signal at I-89 Exit 14 and will transmit at least 10 seconds out of every minute. He will also do all sorts of sneaky things to trip you up and will bombard you all evening with bad jokes. Finding him fast may be essential to keep your sanity.

This will be a great hunt – whether you find the fox or not. So, make sure you come out and join us!

OUR LAST RANV MEETING

by Fred NIZUK, Sec'y

Nice weather and an opportunity to check out a bunch of equipment brought a good number of people to the July meeting, which featured the RANV annual tune-up clinic. Arm loads of test equipment, transceivers, and HTs were present by the time the meeting began.

Discussion of results from this year's Field Day by our W1NVT station made up the majority of our club business. Mitch W1SJ had a tally of contacts, broken down by station, hour, and band. Details can be found in last month's newsletter or on the Web. Although our score didn't reach last year's record high, the club's effort was quite successful, given the prevailing propagation. The newly purchased tower helped to put many extra QSOs in the CW log, allowing us to out perform the great job done in the past. Other highlights were that we earned all available bonus points and had several operators join us for their first time, and operated a station or mode they had not worked before. Thanks to everyone who was involved!

The August RANV meeting will be the annual picnic, Saturday, August 5th, at Knight's Point State Park in North Hero. The club will pick up the tab for admission, soft drinks, and charcoal for the grill; you bring the food and entertainment. There will be antennas and radios set up to put Grand Isle County on the air, and there is plenty of room and lake for the kids. All radio amateurs are invited, and we have been trying to get the word out to all the local radio clubs. Just tell them at the gate that you're with the radio club.

The annual tune-up clinic began with a trip to the parking area to test out mobile radio installations. Bob WE1U brought both his technical expertise and a ton of test equipment with him, and surveyed the mobile 'fleet'. Most of the installations performed pretty well, although harsh Vermont winters and skinny power cables did keep some setups from enjoying their maximum efficiency. Bob came well prepared,

with a notebook containing sheets to record each measurement, which was presented to each operator at the end of the evening.

Once the mobile installations were checked, we all moved inside. Many models of HT radios were tested on the service monitor that was brought down for the clinic. Output power and deviation, as well as receiver sensitivity, were some of the checks performed. With all of the features and bands that newer HT radios have, it was nice to see the majority perform so well. It was also an opportunity for everyone to see the different features and performance of many different brands and models of radios – more than you could possibly do in a couple of hours at a hamfest or radio store. Also noted were how several of the general coverage receivers were pretty deaf in some areas outside the amateur bands.

After a break for refreshments, Bob WE1U and Brian N1BQ showed us the projects that they've each been working on. Bob, with a group of other hams, has been building the Elecraft K2 HF transceiver. They are actually in the process of building the second one, as the first is already completed, and both the finished radio and the work in progress were available for inspection. The Elecraft has received a lot of positive press lately, both for its good design and strong technical support.

Brian has begun to assemble the Small Wonder Labs White Mountain 20, which is a 5-watt SSB transceiver. Although not as full of features as the K2, its small size and low power requirements makes it a good radio to take along and operate from almost anywhere, either on phone or PSK-31. Both Brian and Bob commented on how well done the instructions and documentation were on these kits. Although these projects are not really for the first time project builder, they don't require large amounts of technical knowledge. We look forward to making our first QSO with them using their new radios.

THE PREZ SEZ

by Paul AA1SU, President

Staying active in ham radio is always a challenge. But, the fact that you belong to such an active club shows that you are committed to this great hobby. Amateur radio offers a wide variety of activities to keep us busy. Exploring new modes keeps us on our toes, and educates us every step of the way. Some say that computers and the Internet detract from ham radio. While this is true to some extent for some of us, I find that I spend most Internet time visiting ham radio related sites and I subscribe to reflectors that mirror my current interests.

This month offers us a time to kick back and relax at the club picnic. It is a time to enjoy time with our family and our ham radio friends at the same time. We will be swimming, canoeing, and cooking. But, at the same time, we'll be on the air with just the two basics of modes; SSB and CW. Is this going to be a great day or what?

Stay active in ham radio in your everyday life and in your travels. HT's make great hiking companions and equally good conversation pieces while visiting family and friends far away. Have fun this summer and stay cool.

Contacting RANV

In Person: Picnic, Saturday August 5th
at Knight's Point State Park
By Mail: PO Box 9392, South
Burlington, VT 05407
By Radio: 145.15 repeater
By E-mail: w1sj@arrl.net
WW Web: <http://www.ranv.together.com>

Principals:
President Paul AA1SU 860-1134
VP/Tres: Richard WN1HJW 372-4595
Secretary: Fred N1ZUK 878-4209
Editor: Mitch W1SJ 879-6589

Please send submissions for newsletter to the editor, W1SJ.

DF YOUR NEIGHBORS!

By Mitch W1SJ

A couple of months ago, I picked up a Yaesu VX5R and have been happily playing with it ever since. Besides being a three band (50, 144, 440 MHz) HT, it also receives AM, short wave and virtually everything above 48 MHz. Just below the 6-meter band, at 48-50 MHz, there are a lot of Part 15 low power transmitters in use. Everything from cheap walkie-talkies, older cordless phones and baby monitors can be found in this region. The baby monitors are of interest, since they produce a steady low power signal which is perfect for practicing our transmitter hunting skills! Of course, if you don't have a radio such as a VX5R, you may still be in luck. If you have any garden-variety scanner, those all cover 30-50 MHz. You won't have the advantage of having an S-meter, but good transmitter hunting can take place without one anyway.

Besides getting some good hunting skills in, listening to baby monitors is entertainment in itself. Often you will hear a baby making, well, baby noises. Often, you will hear nothing; usually meaning the baby is asleep. Also, many times, you will hear a TV or radio on in the background. The weirdest type of stuff you hear is when Mom and Dad have a knockdown drag-out argument, totally unaware they are broadcasting to the neighborhood. This happens more than you think. One would think that these monitors would come with some type of warning about being careful what you say. Legally, Part 15 users have no protection for privacy or against interference. Recently, I heard a monitor with the baby goo-gooing in the foreground and the sound of a power saw in the background. I was trying to imagine what sick

puppy was taking a chain saw to the kid. Later, when I located the house, I laughed when I saw that they were putting an addition on, right next to the kid's room.

Back to the task at hand – fox hunting, or baby hunting, as the case might be. Since these devices are very low power – on the order of 10-100 milliwatts into an inefficient antenna, they usually don't go too far. Typical range is a couple hundred feet. The chainsaw gang was the exception – they were full quieting 1000 feet away. Must be a souped up version. These weak signals will not pin the S-meter very far away – if at all. Forget trying to receive the signal with a 1" paper clip or no antenna. It is fairly easy to find a place in the street where the signal peaks and then drops off. Then it is a simple job to determine which side of the street the house is on. Be sure not to trespass!

While you could build a yagi for DFing (remember this is a larger 49 MHz unit, not 146 MHz), the key here is to gain practice sniffing out a nearby signal. If you are using a radio without an S-meter, you will have to use an assortment of short antennas (here come the paper clips) to keep the signal noisy. The spot in which the signal has the most quieting, with the smallest antenna is where the transmitter is at (*we hope*).

Of course, you find baby monitors everywhere. Best bets are suburban neighborhoods (*i.e. Essex and Colchester*) with lots of kids. Areas with older people or commercial areas will not have these types of units. But, in a commercial area, you could always DF the 10 GHz door openers on your radar detector. We'll leave that for another episode!

COMING UP

Despite being in the doldrums of summer, there are a lot of ham radio events in the next 6 weeks.

This weekend features the RANV Summer Picnic, Saturday, at Knight's Point State Park. See details on page 1.

Our Summer Fox Hunt takes place Friday, August 11th, starting at 6pm on 145.15 MHz. Fox W1SJ will keep all of you running in circles.

The very next day, Saturday, August 12th, is the *International Hamfest*, at its new location at the Elks Club on North Avenue in Burlington. This is a one-day affair this year, so get there early to get the goodies.

August 26-27th is the *ARRL New England Division Convention* at the Holiday Inn in Boxborough, Massachusetts. This event is not know for a large flea market, but it does have an excellent forum program, with Mitch W1SJ as one of the speakers. If you want to meet the who's who in amateur radio in New England, this is the place to be!

On September 9-10th is the *VHF QSO Party*. The RANV expeditionary force will again descend on Mt. Equinox to hand out hundreds of contacts on the VHF and UHF bands. Why not come on down and sample what a full-blown VHF contest is like. You might get hooked! Otherwise, fire up those VHF and UHF radios and hand out contacts from here.

RANV's fall season of meetings start on Tuesday, September 12th when our featured speaker will be Vermont Traffic Manager Karl KB1DSB who will give us an introduction to traffic handling in Vermont.

Ham Radio events a-plenty coming up. You won't want to miss it!

CONTEST CORNER

by Paul AA1SU

It seems that I learned a valuable lesson recently. If you don't submit your contest log in time, the score keeper will not count it. This happened to me recently with the ARRL 160-Meter Contest. In the August issue of QST, I am listed as a check log. So, it is important to keep an eye on the deadline. Review your log, send it in, and check whatever web page might be mentioned, to see that you are posted in the correct category, etc.

Congratulations go out to Fred N1ZUK for posting a fine score in the ARRL January VHF Sweepstakes, as well as to Mitch W1SJ for a huge score in the ARRL 160 Meter Contest. Mitch has just hung the plaque up for Sweepstakes High Power Phone in New England. Here at AA1SU, I was pleasantly surprised to find another certificate in my mailbox this month. This one was late in getting back to me. It is from Sweden (*nice stamps by the way*), and is for a little known contest called the *TOEC WW Grid Contest*. It was for the August 1998 CW contest, first place in the W1 Call Area. They apologized for the tardiness. By the way, I was the only one in it from the W1 Call Area.

For the next few weekends, we have a variety of contests to keep us busy. Some of these might sound uneventful, but any one of them can be good practice for the larger events. And, as always, people love to get Vermont. On August 12-13, there is the Worked All Europe DX Contest, CW. This is the one with the QTC feature, where you actually send back parts of your log from earlier in the contest. It is a difficult contest, but one of my favorites. Also this weekend is a smaller version of the IOTA Contest. It is called the *W/VE Island Contest*, meaning that just U.S. and Canadian stations will be competing against each other. The mode is phone only, and it starts Saturday at Noon and ends Sunday at 8pm. Exchange is signal report and state. They have their own awards program, and details can be found at <http://eng.mu.edu/usislands>.

Moving onto August 19-20, there is the *North American QSO Party*, Phone. I believe that Ron KK1L has the Vermont record for this contest, and he would just welcome a good challenge. It starts at 2pm Saturday and runs for 12 hours, with a 10 hour limit for single ops. Exchange name and state. Multipliers are states. Thailand is also having a mixed mode contest this weekend. So, if you hear the prefix HS calling CQ, for goodness sakes work it. Then E-mail me to brag that you got it.

For the weekend of August 26-27, there is the *Top of Europe Contesters* (TOEC) Grid Contest, CW. It starts at 8am Saturday and ends at 8am Sunday. Exchange signal report and grid square. Remember last month's teaser? That's right, here is a grid square contest for HF; and it's not the only one. Like I said earlier, it is not wildly popular, but it is a good way to earn some wallpaper (*a certificate*). Rules can be found at <http://www.qsl.net/toec>.

The first weekend in September brings us to the *North American Sprint*, CW. This is a hard contest to master. It helps to have high power, as there is no power category, and it helps to be able to copy CW rather fast. Exchange is: his call, your call, serial number, name, and state (*whew!*). Practice on the logging program NA is recommended. Plus, it has the unique QSY rule; you have to keep changing frequency for the whole 4 hours. It takes place 8pm to Midnight on Saturday. Details will be in next month's QST.

And yes, there is one more weekend to mention. On September 9-10 is the ARRL *September VHF QSO Party*. Details are one page 114 of the August QST. It starts at 2pm Saturday, and ends at 11pm Sunday. WB1GQR will once again mount an assault on Mt. Equinox, and the station is looking for operators. Contact Mitch, if you would like to operate from one of the top weak signal stations in the Northeast. Mention RANV on your summary sheet for this one.

Next month, it's CQP time!

HAMS NEEDED FOR THE BIG 'E'

by AA1SU

RANV has been contacted by the hams that run the Amateur Radio booth at the Big E. The Big E is a large agricultural fair that runs from Friday September 15 through Sunday October 1 in West Springfield, MA. I will not be volunteering as a club, but you are all welcome to volunteer to help out on your own. The Ham Radio booth needs to be manned from 10am to 10pm each day.

Volunteers will help tell people about ham radio. There will be information sheets, radiograms, packet radio, and HF radio. You will talk to people, answer their questions, send some radiograms, joke around with them, or just play on the radios. Two people are needed at the booth for each shift. During the week, there are two six-hour shifts, and on the weekends, there are three four-hour shifts. Benefits of volunteering include free admission to the fair and parking. So, when you are done working, you can go have fun at the fair for free.

To volunteer, and get more information, contact Tammy Krauss K1TLK at 860-205-2220, kb1cyn@aol.com. Or contact Al Gerke N1JWF at 860-747-1925, al1jwf@juno.com.

RANV SUMMER PICNIC
Saturday, August 5th
Knight's Point State Park

FOX HUNT
Friday, August 11th 6pm
on 145.15

RANV

P.O. Box 9392

South Burlington, Vt 05407

<http://www.RANV.together.com>