



# Radio Amateur News & Views

The Official Journal of the Radio Amateurs of Northern Vermont

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## RANV SUMMER PICNIC AUGUST 3<sup>rd</sup>

This Saturday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, is the date of the **RANV Summer Picnic** at Knight's Point State Park. Festivities get underway at 11 AM. **RANV** will again invite all area amateur operators and families to join us in this event. We will provide admission to the park, soda, and charcoal for the grills. You bring the rest!

There are a number of activities at the picnic to take part in and these fall in two general categories: normal stuff and geek stuff. First and foremost in the normal category is barbecuing and **eating**, something I know we are all experts in. There is also talking, another expert activity. Other activities include swimming, boating, hiking and volleyball. Bring necessary sporting goods.

In the geek category, we have all sorts of radio activities. We will have an HF station set up for SSB, one set up for PSK-31 and one set up for Slow Scan TV! And we will also have the **RANV** Picnic tradition of the fox hunt on site.

Knight's Point State Park is located on North Hero Island. Take Route 2 to the Champlain Islands and go through South Hero and Grand Isle and cross the drawbridge onto North Hero. The park entrance is a few hundred feet past the bridge on the left. Tell the attendant you are with the Radio Club. Be sure to bring all necessary play items, sporting goods, clothing, towels, food and garbage bags. **Do not bring any pets** since they are not allowed in the park.

Please let me (w1sj@arrl.net) know how many in your party are coming so we can get an accurate count for planning.

## FOX HUNT – AUGUST 9<sup>th</sup>

Our August Fox Hunt will be held Friday, August 9<sup>th</sup> starting at 6 PM on the 145.15 repeater. W1SJ will be your trusty fox.

Over the last few years I've tried hiding in tough spots and in easy spots. I've even hidden in my own back yard. The hunts seem to take even longer these days. I can't tell you where I'll be, but you can count on finding me in an interesting spot.

So, next Friday, check into the hunt on the 145.15 repeater at 6 PM and then tune to the input, 144.55 MHz to listen. The Fox will be hidden in Chittenden County, in a public accessible spot and will transmit at least 10 seconds out of every minute. The number of hunters in the last few hunts have been down. Let's get a great turnout of hunters! Happy hunting!

## COMING UP

It's a very short newsletter this month, as there is not much news to report. Ironically, this August is one of the most active ham radio months around!

We start August with the crown jewel event, the **RANV** Summer Picnic at Knight's Point State Park, this Saturday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>. With nice breezes providing the air conditioning and a million dollar view (*and trees to hang the antennas!*) it is certainly worth it to come down and spend an afternoon relaxing and playing a little ham radio.

Ham radio playing continues the next weekend, August 10-11<sup>th</sup> as well. Friday night is the next **RANV** Fox Hunt, on 145.15 MHz. Saturday is the BARC Hamfest at the Essex High School. On both Saturday and Sunday is the MS-150 bicycle tour. Paul AA1SU is desperately seeking radio volunteers. For your efforts, you get a T-shirt and lunch!

Skip a weekend and on August 24-25<sup>th</sup> is the *ARRL New England Division Convention* in Boxboro, MA. All your favorite ARRL celebrities will be there, as well as a great forum program, a flea market and 2000+ other hamsters. Details are at <http://www.boxboro.org>.

## Contacting RANV

In Person: Meeting, at Picnic August 3<sup>rd</sup>.

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## OUR LAST RANV MEETING

by Mitch WISJ

The meeting was called to order by new President Brian, N1BQ. There was a short discussion on Field Day results. Mitch brought everyone up to date on the repeater and IRLP status.

Brian then changed hats from moderator to speaker as he presented a talk and show & tell on Wireless Networks. A Wireless Network is used to connect several computers in a small area to one network connection. Typically, the cable modem or DSL modem connects to a wireless transceiver, which operates on 2.4 GHz. Each computer on the network has a companion transceiver which "talks" to the base. The range of these units can run 1000-2000 feet in the clear. Unless specific steps are taken to limit access, anyone with a wireless modem can drive near someone's network and enter, getting an internet connection. Brian then showed a list of many networks he was able to log while driving around the area. Many were right in the vicinity of UVM. Not only was he able to access some of the systems and surf, but he mentioned that there was a system just down the street from the O'Brien Center, just out of range! This sounds like a job for our master yagi builders.

This was a very interesting topic, because most of us have not been exposed to computer Wireless Networks before. Not only is this useful for connecting up computers without wires (*a future Field Day project?*), using these networks will provide us with some expertise on the propagation characteristics of the 13 cm, 2.4 GHz amateur band. It is not like 2 meters!

The talk was followed by refreshments and discussion in the main dining area. Thank you to Brian for enlightening us on this very interesting topic!

## THE PREZ SEZ

by Brian N1BQ, President

It seems it was just the other day that we were talking about what we were going to be doing for Field Day, now it seems we have moved so fast that we have begun thinking about next Field Day. Well, don't be alarmed there really is some Summer left for us to enjoy.

This coming weekend, Saturday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August, will be the annual RANV Picnic. We have been graced with wonderful weather the past few years and I hope we will continue the trend. A fun time is usually had by all, with fox hunts, portable operating, good food and good company.

Plans for the Fall are coming along and we have an exciting schedule for the Fall meetings. We have some hands on presentations for portable HF operating and Microwave and video operating. We have one slot still to fill and then of course rolling into the early winter. If you have any ideas about things you would like to see, let us know.

At several recent meetings I have heard from different people about how they aren't on the air for this reason or that. I would like to see if we can do something about this. Amongst our membership we have quite a selection of spare equipment as well as problem solving talents untapped. If you are having a problem getting on the air, let us know we can and we will help you.

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## CLUSTER GONE

We just learned that the DXBVT cluster is no longer available. Fred N1ZUK reports that the cost of maintaining the cable connection is too much given the current employment and economic situation. There is no plan for when this service might be continued.

Those with cable connections can find many internet DXClusters to connect to. If you only have packet, the connection down to the Albany Cluster will be slow and poor.

## IRLP NEWS

IRLP Node 723 on the 145.15 repeater has been quite busy, despite repeater problems and work-around solutions. The repeater was damaged by lightning in late June and a backup system is running on the mountain. The backup does not have a UHF port, so the IRLP access is on the recently repaired Bolton repeater, now located in Essex. Its screaming 15-mile range won't set any distance records, but it will allow most people in the area to get in. Currently, I am working with Tony WA2LRE to build a new repeater for the mountain and keep the old repeater in semi-retirement at more accessible locations.

During a couple of trips, I got to see and hear what it was like on the other side of the IRLP link. While in New York, I dialed into Vermont on three different nodes down there. I was successful in finding someone up here once, with QSO's resulting with W1RL and N1ZBH (*all the way from Morrisville*). The problem with IRLP is that most nodes require control operator intervention. One node, a wide area repeater in Long Island was user accessible. Two weeks later, I was in Cape Cod and used the 145.39 Scituate repeater to talk to KB1FUV. This mainland repeater does not really cover the Cape and I had to drive way up to the Pilgrim Tower in Provincetown to get a shot at it. I later tried a node in New Hampshire, but no one was around.

Recently, I hooked up with a buddy of mind who moved to Texas and uses a yagi to hit a 440 repeater 60 miles away in Dallas! I also recently spoke with someone in NJ who I operated Field Day with over 30 years ago! And these past few days, I've been keeping touch with Ted K1HD who is in Orlando on business.

The IRLP is a great concept and great network and is getting bigger day by day. Have fun with it, and remember to use a 110.9 Hz tone to bring up the Essex IRLP repeater.

## A NOTE FROM PAUL

by Paul AA1SU

ARRL Vermont Section Manager

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Paul Noel Gayet, and I am the new ARRL Vermont Section Manager, as of July 1, 2002. I have been a Ham since March 20, 1997. I was first licensed as a Tech Plus with the call sign N1YTX. I had a thirst for the hobby, and on the night before Field Day that same year, I passed my Advanced License test, and became KE1IB on July 7<sup>th</sup>. I also got my 20 wpm code test out of the way that night, so that I could concentrate on studying for the Extra Class exam. I remember taking my new call sign on the road to my 20<sup>th</sup> year high school reunion in Maryland. There was a VHF Contest that weekend, and I participated as a Rover. I didn't keep a log; I just made contacts from time to time, heading down I-95. I was hooked. On October 2, 1997, I was issued AA1SU after successfully passing the Amateur Extra Class exam. I was already very active on the Ham Bands with a 5-watt Ten-Tec Argonaut 509 that I borrowed from Tom Cooper W1EAT. He also loaned me a straight key, but no microphone. Needless to say, I got hooked on CW. I soon upgraded to 100 watts and did some SSB. I have also been an active RTTY Contester.

At that Field Day that I mentioned in 1997, I got to go into the phone tent after 2 PM on Sunday using the call sign N1YTX/AA in the Advanced section of 20 Meters. It was such a thrill! The other stations were starved for new contacts, and I had my first pile up. This got me hooked on contesting, and I soon began to write articles for my local club newsletter about the subject. My ambition for the hobby soon led me to be the club secretary for RANV, and two years later, club president. I had fun as a club officer, and dived right into the two positions. I soon began to wonder what the ARRL Field Organization was all about, and who was in it. This led me to write a series of articles that I sent to all Vermont club newsletter editors in the state. You may have read some of them.

Now, my thirst for the hobby has led me to be your Section Manager. As such, I represent the League to you, and I represent you to the League. I will be making Section Appointments in the coming weeks and months to fill those positions that I have been writing about previously. I may actually need you help with these endeavors. To fine qualified help, I may look to you for nominations: who knows?

One of the main items on my agenda will be to build up ARES in Vermont. Many of you have told me that you are interested in this critical organization, but you are not sure where to start. During my two-year term (*maybe more*), I plan to build up, staff, and train ARES membership.

As of January 2003, the Section News that has appeared in QST for decades will only be available only on the web. In the meantime, I will have short messages to you in QST, starting with September 2002. The web page will allow me to expand on Ham Radio activities in Vermont, it will be more current, and I can get more text on the page. Please feel free to contact me at aa1su@arrl.org to introduce yourself, or to send me news for the web page. Our Vermont Section web page is <http://www.arrl.org/sections/VT.html>. Please visit it for the latest news.

## GNU SOFTWARE RADIO

by Jim KE1AZ

More and more, the new models of radio are a mix of what we traditionally think of as a radio, and special-purpose computer. Taking this to an extreme, we can imagine a "software radio", where almost every function is done with software. We could massage the received signals with digital processing, for instance, and have the interface be sliders and drop-down menus instead of dials and knobs. Maybe you've seen ads for devices like this.

I work a lot with Linux computer systems. Linux has many of the features that I admire in ham radio. People have built great systems, just because they like playing with them, and share their work generously. In particular, one of the foundations on which Linux is built is the work of the *Free Software Foundation*. It is dedicated to writing great software (*they call it GNU software*) that everyone can use, for free, and can contribute back to, if they'd like.

There currently is a Free Software project devoted to building a software radio. The introductory paragraph says, "*GNU Radio is a collection of software that when combined with minimal hardware, allows the construction of radios where the actual waveforms transmitted and received are defined by software.*" What this means is that it turns the digital modulation schemes used in today's high performance wireless devices into software problems. The link is <http://www.gnu.org/software/gnuradio/gnuradio.html>, and they have source code and discussion lists. I could get the software to go, but I'm clueless about the hardware. I don't even know enough to know what I'd need to look into.

So, I wonder if anyone else in RANV is interested in this, and especially someone who knows some hardware stuff. You should know that this material is 'alpha', which means that it is rough. You should also be aware that volunteer projects like this can peter out sometimes (*although this one seems active now*). If you are interested, I'd love to talk. Let me know at [jjm@joshua.smcvt.edu](mailto:jjm@joshua.smcvt.edu).

**RANV SUMMER PICNIC**  
**Saturday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 11AM-6PM**  
**Knight's Point State Park**

**RANV FOX HUNT**  
**Friday, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 6PM**  
**145.15 Bolton Repeater**

**NO REGULAR 2ND TUESDAY MEETING THIS MONTH!**

**RANV**

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**<http://www.RANV.org>**