



# Radio Amateur News & Views

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## RANV SUMMER PICNIC August 3<sup>rd</sup> at Knight's Point State Park

Our August meeting will be the gala RANV Summer Picnic, **Sunday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>** at Knight's Point State Park. Festivities get underway starting at 11 AM and run all afternoon. This year's date is moved up one day to Sunday, instead of the usual Saturday, so make sure you come on the correct day!

RANV will supply park admission, soda and charcoal. You supply the rest! For those who are new to the picnic, major activities include eating and talking. There is also antenna stringing, working DX, calling CQ, yakking on the repeater and perhaps even some interesting modes like PSK-31 or SSTV. There is also swimming, hiking, boating, volleyball and fishing. Eating appears to be the hands-down favorite!

Hey, and get this - I've just found out that someone hid a Geocache at Knight's Point within throwing distance of where we set up. Bring your GPS and we'll have some Geocache fun as well!

Be sure to bring family and friends, food to eat, appropriate sporting goods and clothing and any radio stuff you would like to play with. **DO NOT** bring pets! Unfortunately, the park doesn't allow them, and it is too hot to leave a pet in the car. Please let Mitch know how many arwe in your group so that we can plan. See you at the picnic!

## COMING UP!

We have a whole month o' fun to grace the remainder of the summer. This weekend, August 2-3<sup>rd</sup>, is a big one. Saturday morning is the Hamfest at Essex High School and Sunday is the RANV Summer picnic at Knight's Point State Park. Be sure to pack up the family and equipment and head out for a wonderful day at the beach.

The very next weekend, August 9-10<sup>th</sup>, is the MS-150 Bike Tour. Ham radio communicators are still needed to help out along several very scenic routes which run from Sandbar State Park to Johnson State College. The tour goes out to Johnson on Saturday and back to Sandbar on Sunday. Lunch barbecue when you get to the finish!

And the next Sunday after that, August 17<sup>th</sup>, is the Greater Burlington Triathlon in Shelburne. Amateur radio communicators will watch over up to 300 Triathletes as they swim a mile, bike 25 miles and run 6 miles! Contact Paul AA1SU if you would like to help out.

The program for the September 9<sup>th</sup> RANV meeting is unknown. Several officers have been racking their heads to think up an idea. Help us out! Let us know of some suggestions for great meeting topics.

## FOX HUNT AUGUST 15<sup>th</sup>

Don't forget to plan for the next RANV Fox Hunt, Friday, August 15<sup>th</sup> starting at 6 PM on 145.15. Johannes KB1JDT will be the Fox. This will be the second time in a row that we have had to break in a new Fox!

The rules of the RANV Fox Hunt are simple. The fox is located on public assessable property within Chittenden County, in such a spot where there is at least an S-1 signal at I-89 Exit 14 (*Fox should check this ahead of time*). The fox transmits on the input to the 145.15 repeater (*144.55 MHz*) for at least 10 seconds out of every minute (*more is desirable, though*). First finder of the Fox wins the hunt, receives all appropriate bragging rights and becomes the Fox for the October Hunt.

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## OUR LAST RANV MEETING

by *Howie K2MME, Sec'y*

After an eternal winter and spring we finally had a perfect summer's eve, clear, hot and humid. Fortunately, Bob's fan came to the rescue.

Brian mentioned the new 60-meter band. He has his Alinco DX-77 on the new band. Fran KM1Z has opened his TS-450 for 60 meters as well. A discussion of equipment repair and modification centered on the Internet as a great resource.

August 2<sup>nd</sup> is the BARC Hamfest followed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> by the **RANV** picnic at Knight's Point State Park starting at 11 AM. Grand Isle County will be on the air! The snackateer for September's meeting: Don N1QKH.

Our insurance carrier is dropping us in mid-July. Bob KB1FRW is working toward obtaining a new policy. A motion to allow Bob to use his best judgment as far as premium cost was made by Paul AA1SU and seconded by Bob W4YFJ.

Ed N1UR presented a PowerPoint slide show that had us all drooling. His first stop on the travelogue was Curacao as PJ2E. He operated the 2002 IARU in the Single Operator, 2 Radio category last July. This was from contest super station PJ2T right on that great salt water. The station is owned by W0CG with 12 hams contributing to the costs. He had 2400 QSO's and placed 10<sup>th</sup> in the world. The pictures showed multiple large towers, a super sophisticated antenna-rig switching system and a view to kill for. Details like 1" hardline to the antennas and multiple band pass filters allow for full multi-multi operation.

The second stop on the tour was to East Malaysia as 9M6DU in Zone 28 near Singapore. Ed was at a 16 room hotel in the middle of no place. Rooms are \$50 a day and \$20 more with radio privileges at the club station 9M6A. He operated 20 meters only with a 204BA yagi at 80'. An IC-751 and an Acom 2000 amplifier were ready for the using. He won

## THE PREZ SEZ

by *Brian N1BQ, President*

The first part of August is a busy ham month. The first weekend we have the BARC Hamfest on Saturday and the **RANV** picnic on Sunday. The following weekend we have the MS-150 Bike Tour.

Sara and I have just come back from one of the most enjoyable ham gatherings I have ever attended. "Lobstercon" is a gathering of QRP interested hams at a campground on the Maine Coast. We had a small flea market, had some small presentations, put antennas up (*88-foot doublet from a kite 400 feet*) and operated on 20-meter SSB with 2.5 watts. We worked a dozen European stations. Saturday night they brought in 100 lobsters fresh off the boat, and we boiled them up with fresh corn and had a feast. People split off into groups or wandered group to group. Some talked radio, some just talked, and some operated. I must say I learned first hand what "AGC Thump" was all about when one of my CQs on 40 CW was answered by the guy three tents over! We capped

Oceania on 20 meters but felt that it was a better QTH for DXing than contesting, as many beams did not get pointed to this part of the world.

Last stop on the tour was Macaw near Hong Kong where he operated from the Hotel Royal in Room 1717, which was set up for operating by several well-known Finnish hams. A C3 tribander on a 20-foot tower on the roof (*next floor up*) was waiting. This must be a neat place because a call to room service yielded all the necessary equipment from a storage site in the basement. Ed used the call XX9TEP doing DXing, not contesting this time. The tower and antenna have now been dismantled. Ed pointed out that these operations were anything but spartan. No tents on the beach and generators, just first class radio setups in great places.

the trip off with a side trip to the L.L. Bean store in Freeport, Maine on the way home.

I have long felt that **RANV** is one of the more sociable ham radio groups with which I have been associated in my 25 years of hamming from New York to New Jersey to Vermont. Our upcoming picnic is a chance for all the new recent members to find out how true this is. The three or four **RANV** picnics I have attended have been very enjoyable events. The location is perfect. Tall trees for antennas and shade from the sun, immediate access to the water for swimming, clean bathrooms, good solid tables (*for eating and operating*), good grills and add to that a dash of good people and you have a formula for a very enjoyable afternoon. I am looking forward to seeing you all there.

Don't forget, **RANV** picks up the entrance fee to the park. Just tell the person on the gate that you are with the ham radio group. We also supply charcoal and drinks.

### Contacting RANV

In Person: Picnic, Sunday August 3rd,  
Knight's Point State Park  
Route 2, North Hero

By Mail: PO Box 9392,  
So. Burlington, VT 05403

By Radio: 145.15 repeater

WW Web: <http://www.ranv.org>

President: Brian N1BQ 899-4527  
n1bq@wulfden.org

VP/Tres Bob KB1FRW 434-2517  
mcamp@gmavt.net

Secretary: Howie K2MME 651-0842  
k2mme@juno.com

Editor: Mitch W1SJ 879-6589  
w1sj@arrl.net

Please send submissions for the newsletter to the editor, W1SJ.

# REPEATER NEWS

by Mitch W1SJ

I can happily report that the repeater and links are performing great. Local users of the repeater have been doing great. Everyone has been embracing the timers on the repeater and the level of operation has been crisp. However, there have been a number of recent operating incidents from users calling in on the Internet which have been less than desirable.

Last week, a station connected and disconnected 4 times throughout the course of an hour. False connects are unfortunately a fact of life on Echolink. Each time someone connects to us, they get a text message giving information about the repeater timeouts. This station called in and finally proceeded to start up a QSO. He timed out the link and was warned about the timer. He timed out again and was again warned. He acknowledged timing out and made an excuse for his wordiness. On the third timeout, I joined the conversation and made it clear that he would either adhere to our timer and other rules or not use the link. Finally, he got it and stopped timing out. This was not an isolated incident as this very same scenario has occurred several times over the last month from both Echolink and IRLP users.

If someone is told (*many times*) that we have a specific requirement for operating and they chose to ignore it, what does that say about the ability and courtesy of these operators? This fellow told me he did not have any malicious intent. Well then, why did he continue to over-talk the repeater on each transmission? When you are a guest in someone's home (*or repeater*), you comply with the wishes of the host – not ignore them and be rude.

Another problem I have noticed is QSO's across the link. It is an IRLP requirement (*and ours*) which calls for you to drop the link if you are having a local QSO. Last week, a

station called in from a conference on Echolink. He left the link up and then proceeded to have a QSO with someone on the conference, all the while connected to our repeater. The stations left no breaks, which did not allow me to drop the link and eventually timed out the system. I finally got in and dropped the link and one of the stations promptly brought it back up! I got back on again and asked both stations to drop the link. They acknowledged this, but kept the link up for several minutes longer. I was not pleased.

If you are active on Echolink, you will notice that there are repeaters which you cannot connect to. That is because they have an exclusive connect list. If you are not on their list, you cannot connect. After some of the rotten operating over the last few weeks, I have given serious thought to this mode. It is nice to have connections from all over the world, but the quality of some of the operators leaves a lot to be desired. Frankly, I really don't want to deal with inconsiderate operators who don't care to follow our repeater guidelines.

As local users, the only thing to do is to steadfastly remind the linking station of our requirements. If they are unwilling to comply, end the QSO and drop the link. If they continue to be a nuisance, they will be blocked.

There was another incident last week, involving a local station which bears repeating because it is very serious. One afternoon, a lockdown occurred. A lockdown is when someone's transmitter is engaged without the owner being aware of it. We get to hear inadvertent (often embarrassing) conversations, car radios and other weird things until the repeater times out. This incident went on for 20 minutes, thus keeping the repeater unusable. If it occurred longer, I would have DF'd the offender. It is embar-

rassing to be uncovered doing this. And if you are not around, I will take whatever steps necessary to take your transmitter off the air. There are two simple things you can do to keep a lockdown from happening: 1. ALWAYS shut the radio off when leaving the car; 2. provide a hook or safe spot for the microphone so that something cannot fall on it and lock it and; 3. never leave a child alone with a radio (*you should never leave a child alone, radio or not*). Don't lock up the repeater. Enough said on that!

## RANV HAM UNIVERSITY

From Field Day, we have learned that we had too few new operators to staff the GOTA and VHF Stations. It was also clear to us that new operators need to be trained as opposed to being dropped into the fire. To answer this need, we will offer the Ham University program. This 1-year program starts with hams who would like to develop their operating and contesting skills. It starts with low-impact operating training at the picnic, continues with some classes, some contests (*10 meters, VT QSO and others*) and culminates with the final exam at next year's Field Day. By next Field Day, our graduates will be trained killers on the GOTA station!

This program will not work unless we have students who are willing to sign up and put the time and effort in to train. The requirements are: 1. Novice or Technician license (*or training for license*), and 2. RANV membership and available time to do the training. There is no charge for this course. By the end of the training, the students will be proficient operators. Prospective students should contact Mitch W1SJ for enrollment details.

# FOX BOX INAUGURAL

by Mitch W1SJ

A couple of Saturdays ago was the inaugural flight of the *Fox Box*. The Fox Box is a self-contained hidden unit containing transmitter, controller, battery and antenna. It runs its own fox hunt by transmitting at regular intervals. The Box is hidden away somewhere and the hunters have to track it down. With the lower power and smaller antenna of the Fox Box, the hunt boundaries are smaller. In this case, the range was only a couple of miles.

In the first Fox Box hunt, the box was hidden along an inter-neighborhood path in the Porters Point area of Colchester. The exact coordinates: N44° 32.795' W73° 15.495'. Hunters were somewhat baffled since all they saw were private homes lining the streets. However, upon careful looking, they found the little patch of woods and finally, the box.

Fran, KM1Z was first finder at 12:50 PM. He started right out at 11 using a homebrew Doppler DF system. Unfortunately, the tones emitted by the Box drove the Doppler crazy! Brian N1BQ and Paul AA1SU started later in the afternoon. They found the Box at 3:25 and 3:27 respectively. Brian reported hearing the Box from his home location on the hill in Underhill, which was truly amazing, given the power and antenna limitations. Bob KB1FRW started at 6:00 when he got out of work. He got into the neighborhood, but his phasing DF system was giving inconclusive results. Looks like he has more work to do to get the equipment tuned in.

I hope to provide more Fox Box hunts. These will be more for practice and will be separate from the usual **RANV** hunts held every other month. In addition to the usual Fox Hunt at the picnic, I plan to hide the Fox Box at the hamfest, the day before. Interested hunters should let me know what days and times would be best for them to attend a Fox Box Hunt. The event should allow for at least 6 hours of daylight hunting.

# CONFESSIONS OF A NEWBIE FOX HUNTER

by Brian N1BQ

Despite having made many anticipatory noises to the contrary through the years, I have managed never to go afield hunting a hidden transmitter. Now that I am officially retired and “gainfully unemployed” as my wife, Sara W1SLR says, I decided it was time to fill in the blanks on my ham radio *curriculum vitae*. So Mitch W1SJ announces that the infamous “Fox Box” is ready for its inaugural trials ... and off I go.

Armed with my Kenwood TMD700 mobile, my Kenwood THD7 talkie, the “tape measure” two meter beam we built at the **RANV** meeting, and two paper clips, I was ready to go. I just needed to dredge up the three things Mitch W1SJ and Bob KB1FRW told me beforehand: 1. use the deep null off the backside of the beam rather than looking for the peak; 2. when using paperclips use your body as a shield and look for a null; 3. signals sometimes get worse for a while as you get closer to the source – have faith in your intuition!

First, I tried to hear the fox from home. Wulfden being at 1600 feet, I actually was able to just barely hear it on the base antenna on the tower. What this told me, was that it would be 20 minutes or more of driving until I would hear anything in the truck. I took a wild stab at the end of the airport runways on Lime Kiln Road (*hint: “it flew in”*) and that was almost my undoing because I actually heard the tones just above the noise right at the end of the runways. Mitch told me I needed to get on the other side of the Interstate. So I took off and drove to Watertown Hill. I got a two bar reading there, headed up to Blakely Road, and started towards Mallets Bay. I made a few tries north from Blakely but each petered out as I drove north. I then tried Marble Island and it looked promising. It, too, petered out. But I got some 4 bar hits when I went by spots open to the west.

Time for the beam – definitely to the west. Back in the truck and west on Lakeshore Drive towards Porters Point. Stop and take another reading. Still going right. Stop again by Thayer Circle the beam is getting me full strength readings, time for the rubber duckie – very confusing all around. Oh well, let’s go father down the road. Signal reading is down a bit. Took another beam reading, went left on Porters Point Road and went a half mile. Now the talkie is full scale, time for the paper clip.

OK, now I know what “the fox box flew in” means. I am on Bluebird Drive. So much for the paper clip; the 5 inches of wire is getting full-scale readings. I stopped by Mitch & Debbie’s where Debbie gives me two more paper clips and wire cutters to make them shorter. Take off again with wires of every inch length from one to four inches.

Paul, AA1SU showed up and he is having similar results. We finally realize there was a dead giveaway. This was a residential neighborhood with house one up against another. The only place the box could be hidden would be on one of those gaps between properties with a usually grown over path between two neighborhoods. Half a block later we found it. Took paper clips out of talkies, still full scale, ten minutes of bush-whacking later – success.

Mitch’s paperclip idea is good, its simple and cheap and the only thing for in close. I did find that holding several pieces of wire in your mouth while stumbling around looking is a drag and at the very least potentially unpleasant. A piece of foam as a holder would be a good idea.

I had fun and I learned a lot. Thanks, Mitch! Thanks, Bob!

## THE NEW GEEKS

by Mitch WISJ

It used to be that hams were only people carrying radios, outside of police and firemen. Years ago, hams not only carried 1 handheld, but often had 2 or 3 hung from their belt. And HT's in those days were big affairs. Hams in those days were big affairs too! Go to any public place and there was some ham yapping loudly into an HT or two. And when we weren't on the radio, we spent hours in front of the computer playing packet radio or some other such silliness. We were the ultimate Geeks! And we wore our badges of Geekdom, the HT, on the belt, along with other badges, such as the plastic pocket protector and the high-water pants.

Gee, that has all changed! HT's have become dual band and tri-band affairs, and have become much smaller. Instead of 3 big HT's on the belt, now there is one tiny HT in the shirt or pants pocket (*I usually conceal my HT now*). Hams are somewhat more conscious about talking loudly into their radios; usually QSO's are taken outside of a crowded area. Even the health kick has made an impact. I've noticed that not only the attendance at Dayton has gotten smaller, but so has the average waistline!

All of this has created a vacuum. Someone had to step into the new Geek role. And guess who that is? Mr. & Mrs. Average Person, that's who. Look around you – what do you see? People in all walks of life with cell phones hanging off their belts. Not only cell phones, but pagers and Palm Pilots as well. And not just during business, but even in stores, movies and discotheques! These people are not just content to wear these icons, but they use them as well. Go to any public place and there is an average person talking into a cell phone in a loud voice, usually discussing something unimportant like the grocery list. We all really notice this when someone does this during a movie or an opera. Look at the driver next to you when you stop at a light. The chances are better than 50% that he/she is yapping on a cell phone – even in such fascist places like New York where they are banned. I've heard that there already is a local doctor who does surgery to implant a cell phone receiver in your ear so that you can talk with the minimum of interruption. And what do these people do when they are not on the cell phone? They whip out their laptops and surf the net (*whoops! – this story was written on a laptop!*).

How do hams feel about losing their Geek status? Most I've spoken to didn't seem all that upset about it. Interestingly, hams have been dressing better over the last few years and non-hams seem to have made high-water pants a fashion statement. I've heard a rumor that pocket protectors will be big next year. I tried to follow a lead that the ARRL was behind this change after they hired a high-priced consultant to improve the image of ham operators. However, they didn't return my calls!

I'm off to the Mall for a wardrobe change!

## RAMBLINGS

by Paul AAISU, VT SM

It was great working Field Day this year, plus visiting a few sites around the state. As usual, I had my favorite shift, working CW in the middle of the night. This is a little hard on the XYL, but it was a lot of fun. I made up for it by not visiting any more Field Day sites on Sunday; I hung around the house. Next year, I'll travel to a different part of the state first. I do this as part of my new Section Manager duties.

As your Section Manager, it is my duty to make sure things go smoothly within the Vermont Section. It's not always an easy task, but I enjoy it. I like getting out to visit other club meetings around the state, but I am glad that this recent tour is finally over. I suspect that I will start up again in 18 months or so. By then, I'll be in the mood to get back out there, and I'll have something new to talk the clubs about. In the meantime, I seem to find myself invited to several club picnics all of a sudden, with lots of stuff to eat. This may require my attention.

Of course, my favorite club meeting is the **RANV** meeting every month. I never miss one, especially the summer picnic! I hope to see you and your families this coming Sunday at Knight's Point State Park in North Hero. Since I am at the meetings, I would like to say don't be afraid to pull me aside, and ask me about something that is on your mind regarding ham radio in general. It does not have to be an ARRL question. I am willing to help, or point you to a person that might be more qualified than myself.

Speaking of qualified people, you probably know that I am always on the look out for hams to fill positions in the ARRL Field Organization. Currently, I am looking to fill Official Observer, Public Information Officer, and other appointments. You can find more information about ARRL Field Appointments by visiting the ARRL web site, and searching for it. There is also an on-line application that will be forwarded to me. The minimum requirement is that you are an ARRL member.

I hope the summer finds you well and healthy. Try to get out and exercise while you can. Take care, and I'll see you down the log, as they say.

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## FIELD DAY RESULTS

The Field Day logs have been submitted to the ARRL and the book is closed. The final tally is 3368 QSOs and 10250 points. An extra 20 meter QSO was found! A full package of statistics, discussion and pictures are on the **RANV** web site. Field Day participants have been sent the location of these files. Otherwise, our Field Day summary is available to all on the web. Thanks to all who participated and helped out in the effort!

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

**RANV FOX HUNT**  
**Friday, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 6PM**  
**145.15 Bolton Repeater**

**RANV**

P.O. Box 9392

South Burlington, Vt 05407

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