



Radio Amateur News & Views

The Official Journal of the Radio Amateurs of Northern Vermont

AUGUST 2006

Vol. 16 No. 8

RANV SUMMER PICNIC August 5th at Kill Kare State Park

Our August meeting will be the annual RANV Summer Picnic, **Saturday, August 5th**. Festivities get underway starting around 11 AM and run all afternoon. RANV will supply park admission, soda and charcoal. You supply the rest! The major activities will include eating and talking. There is also fox hunting, antenna stringing, working DX, making contacts on SSB and PSK-31, yakking on the repeater and geeky things like linking up laptops. Other activities include swimming, hiking, boating, volleyball and fishing. We can even take a ferry over to Burton Island and activate a rare DX island. In years past, eating appears to be the hands-down favorite!

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. Leave pets at home since the park doesn't allow them, and it is too hot to leave a pet in the car. **Please let Brian know how many are in your group so that we can plan.**

Directions to Kill Kare are as follows: Take I-89 North to exit 19, St. Albans. Go past the light and down the access highway 1 mile to Route 7. Make a right and head 0.5 miles into downtown St. Albans. Look for Taylor Park (*big green*) on your right and then look for Lake Street and make a left. Go 3 miles on Lake Street until you come to the lake and the community of St. Albans Bay. The Bayside Pavilion will be at your left and a Shell station at your right. Make a right turn and head north. You will pass St. Albans Town Park. Keep going! You will only go 0.7 miles from the turn and will cross a small bridge. Right after this bridge, turn left on to Hathaway Point Road. Unfortunately, there is no sign for the Park at this junction, so you will have to pay attention. Go 3 miles to the entrance of the Park. We should be in the corner. If you have a GPS, the coordinates are: N44 46.778 W73 11.035. If you get lost, give a yell!

The last few RANV meetings and events have been poorly attended. This is a pure fun event and there is no reason why a majority of the membership cannot make it out for part of the day. Be sure to bring lots of family and friends. We want this to be a social event and not necessarily a total Geekfest (*OK, bring the laptop, but leave it in the car!*) There will be people at the picnic all afternoon, but if you plan to come late, give a call on the repeater first.

See you at the picnic!

FOX HUNT AUGUST 18th

Don't forget to plan for the next RANV Fox Hunt, Friday, August 18th, starting at 6 PM on 145.15. Paul AA1SU and Kayle KB1JOO will collaborate as co-Foxes.

The rules of the RANV Fox Hunt are simple. The fox is located on publicly accessible property within Chittenden County, in such a spot where there is **more than** 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 **over** 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.

IN THIS ISSUE...

Fox Hunt

DX Is...

ARRL Convention

Repeater News

More Repeater News

Colchester Event

Rare Wallpaper

OUR LAST RANV MEETING

by Carl AB1DD, Sec'y

The July meeting was held at Mills Riverside Park in Jericho with 11 members in attendance. This meeting was our annual Fox Hunt and Geocache Picnic. We got the grill set up and running about 5:30 with BrianN1BQ presiding over the meeting and grill. Shortly thereafter, the burgers and hot dogs started jumping off the grill and onto buns, headed to the stomachs of the hungry hams. There was some discussion about the doneness of some burgers, but it was demonstrated that they were cooked properly. Well done, Brian.

During the feast, Mitch W1SJ snuck off and hid a fox box and then disappeared to look for some caches. After the food ran out, some members started the hunt. It was another close call for Kayle KB1JOO as he and Bob KB1FRW had a race for the fox. As I heard it, Kayle was just about at the fox, actually walked by it, and Bob beat him to it. Other Fox Hunters included Paul AA1SU and Jerry KB1KPO. Paul had a tough time of it because he left the paperclips home!

As the fight raged on over the Fox Box, Brian set up his Icom 703 and fishing pole antenna. The propagation was good, and some contacts were made into Europe. Around dusk, the mosquitoes started dining (*on us*), and the meeting broke up as members headed for cover.

PICNIC
SATURDAY
AUGUST 5TH

THE PREZ SEZ

by Brian N1BQ, President

It's the dog days of summer – yeah, summer. It seems it actually arrived despite all indications to the contrary. We keep coming back to the same things: participation and activity. We had the monthly RANV Steering Wheel meeting recently. There was the same list of usual suspects, same challenges – “what do we do for the XX monthly meeting?” We do have ideas and we do put them out there, but the absence of feedback from the membership is daunting. Come on guys, give us a hand here!

The St. Albans Amateur Radio Club will be holding a hamfest at the Highgate Commons Shopping Center, on Route 7 off of I-89 Exit 20. It will be on August 19th, 8 AM until 3 PM. This is the first year of the event. We all should plan to go and support it. I plan to be there with a table and stuff to sell. This year there is no admission nor sellers fees, but they plan to raise money for the club with prize drawings and 50-50s. I figure I have at least the \$5-10 I would pay to get into any other hamfest to put towards it. There is no other hamfest in this region at this time of year. Let's all get out and set aside at least a couple of hours and a few bucks to see that this one gets a fighting chance at success. In the end it benefits the hobby and each of us.

I read recently the summary of the FCC's Riley Hollingsworth's comments at this year's Dayton Hamfest. Among other things, he said something along the lines if a given town had three hams in it there would be at least two different ham radio clubs. There are many regions with two clubs of 20 people each struggling for existence whereas there could be a single strong club, but that it will never happen. I see a similar situation here in Northwest Vermont. I am not proposing that one club, such as RANV, gobble up

the smaller clubs, but I do see that rather than half-baked duplications of efforts the several clubs in the area could periodically hold joint meetings and share costs and resources. If you take the unique members of the various local radio clubs, the hard core guys who show up month after month, and add them together you have a pretty reasonably sized group who could do more than we are doing now. There is no reason that RANV couldn't stay RANV, BARC couldn't stay BARC and STARC couldn't stay STARC but yet periodically two or all three share a meeting venue for a presentation or activity. Yet again, cooperation and mutual support gains us all.

This issue of the newsletter is early because our next meeting is early. Saturday, August 5th is the annual picnic at Kill Kare State Park in St. Albans Bay. It's a very nice place and the rangers are ham friendly. The clubs supplies charcoal and beverages, the rest is up to you. There will be radios to play with as well. See you all there.

Contacting RANV

In Person: Picnic, August 5, Noon,
Kill Kare State Park,
St. Albans Bay

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: Carl AB1DD 482-3878
ab1dd@arrl.net

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

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

DX IS...

by Ed NIUR

Thanks to Mitch for "Guest Oping" last month on the DX column. Yes, I was in France for a 2 week vacation. In addition to many other things, I spent 3 days in the Normandy Beaches area of France and highly enjoyed the very moving experience there. I highly recommend it to anyone as English is widely spoken in Normandy.

The IARU DX contest was held over the weekend of July 8-9th and conditions were quite good especially during summer and literally at the bottom of the sunspot cycle. I did not operate the contest but people who did say that 10 meters was open to Europe for part of the time and that Japan was booming in on 20 meters in the morning. The WRTC World Radiosport Telecommunications Contest was held concurrently in Brazil. Some of the best testers from all over the world attended. When the dust had settled, it was a Canadian team who won. There are many interesting stories available on the following link for those interested as well as all of the detailed results at www.ncjweb.com.

Everyone in the club can get on 6 meters. I found this fascinating write-up by Bernie W3UR that I wanted to share with you. This is taken from the Daily DX with permission. You should check out Bernie's web site at www.dailydx.com for more info. A subscription to Bernie's service is a surefire way to catch the DX bug.

From the Daily DX, July 12, 2006:

Well no doubt yesterday's big story was that of the opening of 6 meters. I know some of you are not QRV on the "Magic Band", however many are and are working on their 6 meter DXCC and the DXCC Challenge. This is your editor's 4th season on the band and I got to tell you I try to keep the 6 meter box on from sun up to sun down during E

skip season. Wednesday the band opened before sunrise here. The band stayed open to Europe until just after 0000Z today. Granted at times there were only one or two stations being heard. But the biggest opening started just before 2100Z. I was outside working on the pool.

I came in to check something and notice a message on my recorder from K2PLF, Marty, a local six meter DX chaser like myself. The message was something to the effect of "six meters is wide open all across Europe including Eastern Europe". I ran down stairs and could not believe my ears. I have never heard conditions so good and so wide spread into Europe. They were on CW but also even on SSB. The band was packed from about 50066 to well above 50200. I even heard some weak digital (JT6M) signals. Seeing all the spots I didn't know where to begin. So I decided to crank up the CQ Machine and work some new ones that way. I managed to work three new ones on that opening including YU, LZ and SV. Marty on the other hand went around in the search and pounce mode and worked about five or six new ones including T9. The opening was one of the biggest and longest openings I have seen as there were spots from VE1, 2, 3, W1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 0 working stations into most of Western, Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. Sorry no one from the Northern parts. Multiple subscribers reported their findings on the band. One subscriber was so excited at one point during the opening his hand was shaking and he could hardly tune the receiver. Conditions were so good that stations with 10 foot high antennas and five watts were making it across the pond. K0HA, Bill, from IOWA, reported working four hop DX into Europe including F, CT, EA, G, I (5,215 miles), EA6. N4IS, Jose, may have been the first US station to work Montenegro on 6 meters. The QSO took place at 1559Z with YU6DZ, which was followed up by NL7AU/W4. Congratulations to both. After four seasons on the

BOXBOROUGH CONVENTION

The 2006 ARRL New England Division Convention will take place August 26-28th at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Boxborough, Massachusetts. This convention, which occurs only on even years, features a tremendous forum and activities program. Inside, the dealers set up booths, while outside is the flea market. While not quite the size of Hosstraders, one can usually find an interesting array of goodies there. In addition, there will be several fox hunts, VE Sessions, special event station W1A and at midnight, the dreaded Wouff Hong Ceremony!

Boxborough is easily reached via I-89, I-93, U.S. 3 and I-495 and is 225 miles or about 3½ hours from Burlington. Friday night, there are some dinners and banquets, with the forums and activities running all day Saturday and also Sunday until 2.

Details on the convention can be found at: <http://www.boxboro.org>

band I would have to say that over all this has been the best and we are just about at the bottom of the sunspot cycle! Are you on 6? We've probably only got two more weeks of E skip remaining. What will happen today? See you on the Magic Band!

Keep your ears peeled to 6 and 2 meters right now. I heard Wisconsin coming in on 88.9 MHz FM on Friday afternoon (7/14) as I was driving to Boston for the weekend. Great E Layer skip is happening and probably won't last past mid August.

Well, that's it from here for this month. I continue to work on the NIUR antenna farm and will give everyone an update next month. In the meantime, if you work anything interesting (to you) on any band...drop me a line at sawyerred@earthlink.net.

REPEATER NEWS

by Mitch WISJ

There has been a flurry of activity to repair problems on the repeater. Well over a year ago, Neal N1ZRA was up at the site doing commercial work and noticed that there was damage to the hard line feeding the repeater antenna. We made long range plans to allocate money, select the proper hardware and eventually purchase what was needed. Since the repeater was functioning normally, there was no rush. Why charge up the mountain unless it is absolutely necessary?

That day eventually came. In April, I noticed increased noise and reduced performance on the repeater. An order was put in and the necessary hardware was quickly purchased. But in early spring, access up the mountain is tricky at best. Melting snow mixes with mud making for a slippery and dangerous trek. And while we waited for the snow to go away, we were treated to 40 days and nights of rain, or so it seemed. Until everything dried out, an ascent up the mountain would not be tried, unless it was an emergency.

The repeater was working, but things were getting bad. All the rain likely accelerated the problems. The typical scenario was a station getting in OK at first and then getting very noisy and unreadable. Essentially, the repeater was off-limits to folks with handhelds. Using some test equipment in the shack, I could determine that the problem was two-fold. First, there was more feedline loss than expected – almost 3db. That by itself wasn't too bad. But, on top of that, there was, on many occasions, a tremendous amount of desense. Desense is when the transmitter makes the received signal appear weaker because the receiver is getting hammered. When all is right, the repeater has an ultra sensitive receiver which operates unhampered, even with a 40 watt transmitter operating 600 KHz away, and into the same antenna. The ability to

do this is true black magic. But when things like feedlines or antenna go awry, so does the black magic! Needless to say, whenever the transmitter came on, the received signals dropped almost 20 db. In English, what this means is that if you are using 50 watts to get into the repeater, you now will sound like you are using 0.5 watts. And worse, if you are using 1 watt, you now will sound like you are using .01 (*one-hundredth*) watt. Times were tough.

Getting to fix the repeater took on a soap opera quality. Finally, the rains stopped. But then it took several days to get everyone's schedule in sync. Then the rains started again. Finally, we had a working date in early July. We were ready to go! But hold on – the site owner wanted us to get the engineer's approval first. And he was on vacation. And logistics fell through and we couldn't get the key that day. It was a great day for Murphy! Since it was also a great day for a hike, we went anyway to drop off the equipment and check the antenna and feedline first hand. We had a great crew – Neal N1ZRA, Bob KB1FRW, Stuart WB2PBH, Greg KB1MPL, Russ, and me, along with two All Terrain Vehicles and a trailer. This day will be remembered for the great views instead of the antenna work.

With more bad weather closing in, we decided to make a run up a few days later. It was a smaller crew – Neal, Stuart and me. With approval and key in hand, we hopefully would be able to get things done. After a full day of rain, it was a wet slippery slog up and down the mountain. However, we were able to get the new line installed and tied down quickly. We also spent a good deal of time cleaning up the many noise sources in and around the antenna. Our first test of repeater performance came from Bob who took us on a tour of all the dead spots in his house. I was able to quickly ascertain that the desense

COLCHESTER SPECIAL EVENT

I am Kevan 2E0WGM, the training co-ordinator for Colchester Radio Amateurs located in Colchester, Essex, England.

Every year our club holds a small Radio Rally (*Hamfest*) and we are hoping to generate some publicity by making contact with stations in Colchester on your side of the pond. Our club station will be on air at the Rally with the Callsign G3CO/P. The date of the Rally is Sunday, July 30th and we will be active on around 14.285 MHz and 18.155 MHz from around 1230 UTC (8:30 AM). It would be great to make contact with members of **RANV** in Colchester.

We will be having an article published in the local press in the hope this will bring new people into our hobby who may not otherwise be exposed to what Ham Radio has to offer. The article will make reference to the community benefits that Ham Radio can bring by keeping people in touch who may be less mobile. The fantastic work that Hams did in the aftermath of the Asian Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina will get a mention, of course.

Naturally this could also provide some great publicity for **RANV**. I have just returned home from our club meeting where a copy of your latest newsletter was passed around. It looks like you have a pretty active club.

had gone away. We also seemed to get most of the scratchy noises licked (*for now, anyway*). Later, I made some measurements at home and found a marked improvement. The operation was a success! I spent the next day washing mud off of everything.

We certainly had a good run of performance from the repeater – some 3 years since the last visit. The question is not if, but when the next visit will have to come. Eventually something up there will need tending to. I just hope it is a long time from now!

MORE REPEATER NEWS

by Mitch W1SJ

With the technical problems hopefully behind us, it is time to focus again on operating problems. I just received an E-mail complaining about our repeater node being left on the Western Reflector. We actually were blocked from using it for a while. I have heard instances of this in the past, so I know it has been happening.

My assumption is that all users of the repeater and links will use these properly. When that assumption is proven false, I will restrict access until I feel confident that the problem has been resolved. Therefore, access to IRLP Reflectors (*i.e.*, nodes of over 9000) is restricted to control operators only. Other IRLP and Echolink nodes remain available.

Everyone who uses the links does so with the understanding that they alone are personally responsible for the proper handling of the links. Leaving the link on and going away, for any reason, is a giant no-no. If that becomes a problem, access to the entire link system will be restricted. Responsibility for the link system starts with having a clear and reliable signal into the repeater. The weak noisy HT signal into the repeater will just not do for accessing links. Make doubly sure you are full quieting and you stay that way for the duration of the call.

There is a small group of people who have really busted their butt to keep the repeater performing at peak condition. At the very least, everyone expects you, the user, to reciprocate with a clean, quiet signal if you are to use the repeater. There are too many lengthy QSO's with noisy signals giving us all headaches. The signals are so poor I can't understand what is being said, and I'm sure no one else can either. If you are told you are noisy into the repeater, STOP the conversation and fix your signal before carrying on the QSO. If you are talking to someone who is noisy, invite them to fix their signal first before encouraging them to continue. Our club has all sorts of resources to help people with antennas – make sure that those resources are used.

Certainly, in an emergency or in a key situation, we will tolerate any sort of signal to get you help, but beyond the who, what, when, why and how, we expect clean signals. In particular, avoid using HT's for lengthy conversations. Unless you are next door to the repeater (*and no one lives next door to our repeater*), you will invariably swish in and out of the repeater as you move around. If you must use an HT for a period of time, then keep your base radio on and monitor yourself so you know when you get noisy.

STARC TAIL-GATE HAMFEST

August 19, 2006

8 AM - 3PM

Highgate Common Shopping Plaza
Route 7 North or I-89 Exit 20

Talk-in 145.23 (100) or 146.58 Simplex

No charge for tailgating

50/50 and Prize Raffles

Info: 285-6457

n1arn@yahoo.com

www.starc.org

RARE WALLPAPER

by Mitch W1SJ

I just received this nice certificate for the Delaware QSO Party. The Delaware Party ran the same weekend as the Vermont QSO Party. When the weekend was over, I collected up the QSO's and submitted to the Vermont, Delaware and Minnesota QSO Parties, as well as the NA Sprint. This second place finish was the result of FIVE (5) Delaware QSO's in 2 of their 3 counties! The Minnesota Party is very competitive on CW and the Sprint doesn't offer Certificates. And in the Vermont QSO Party I made a record 2375 QSO's and have yet to receive an acknowledgement. (*Hint.. hint...*)



RANV SUMMER PICNIC

**Saturday, August 5th
Kill Kare State Park
St. Albans Bay**

FOX HUNT:

**Friday, August 18th 6 PM
145.15 Repeater**

RANV

P.O. Box 9392

South Burlington, Vt 05407

<http://www.RANV.org>