



SQUELCH TALES



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for November 2024



October Fox Hunt had a good first start for MARA

By KX1I & WD1F

MARA hosted its first foxhunt on October 12 under sunny skies. Robert/W1TON initiated the event using the MARA repeater from the parking lot of the Topsham Red Cross. Prior to the 10am start-time, Marjorie/KX1I deployed as the "fox" with Shauna/K1ALZ maintaining radio contact through 14.721. Hunters began at the Red Cross or from their home QTH.



Marji, KX1I "the Fox"

The "fox" found a wind-protected knoll, overlooking the Kennebec River and Dam, on Summer Street, Topsham. The transmitting device was a Baofeng UV-5R, on simplex at 146.475. Transmissions were roughly 20 second on, then off, with both voice and pre-recorded CW messages.

There were four hunters: Donnie/WD1F, John/K1JJS, John/N1VVI, and Mel/KC1MPV. Donnie/WD1F found the fox first, in 23 minutes. The event terminated at noon.



Donnie, WD1F first to arrive

My first T-Hunt, by Donnie Dauphin, WD1F

As I was crossing into Brunswick I started hearing the signal on my mobile radio. Somewhere around Cooks Corner I was picking it up on the HT. When I made it to

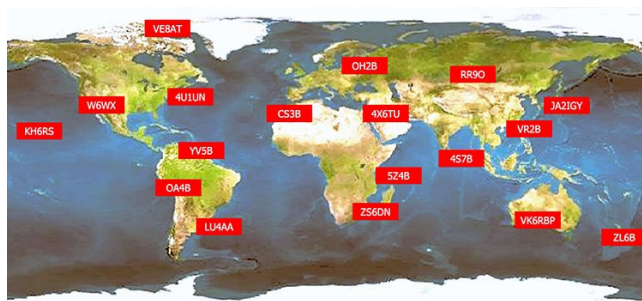
the Fort Andross mill building it was full scale on my HT so I removed the antenna.



Crossing the Frank J. Wood bridge the Fox transmission broke the squelch on the HT with no antenna at all. I knew I was close. I pulled into the Sea Dogs Brewing parking lot, which was empty.

I did the body block (body mass attenuation) direction finding thing and it seemed clear to me that the Fox signal was from further up the river. I had been up the Topsham side of the river before and was familiar with a walking trail that takes you across the small suspension bridge so I headed that direction. In no time at all I saw Marjorie KX1I and Shuana K1ALZ setup in a parking area for that waking path.

In summary I almost drove straight to it. I wish I could say it was my amazing RF sensing abilities and my high tech mapping skills but I think it mostly pure luck. I thought the event, even after finding the fox, was quite fun. Got MARA members on the air, communicating, and exploring areas we would not normally see.



The NCDX/IARU HF Beacon System, a useful tool for DX'ing

By W1ZE

Several years back, pre-COVID, I had a column in this newsletter about the HF Beacon System established by the Northern California DX club (NCDX) and in cooperation with the International Amateur radio Union (IARU). The system provides a beacon service that helps hams determine where there is possible band openings, a very useful tool for DX'ers.

Each beacon transmits once on each band once every three minutes, 24 hours a day. A transmission consists of the callsign of the beacon sent in CW at 22 words per minute followed by four one-second dashes. The callsign and the first dash are sent at 100 watts. The remaining dashes are sent at 10 watts, 1 watt and 100 milliwatts. At the end of each 10 second transmission, the beacon steps to the next higher band and the next beacon in the sequence begins transmitting.

The frequencies where you can hear the beacons are: 14.100 MHz, 18.110 MHz, 21.150 MHz, 24.930 MHz and 28.200 MHz.

Many years ago my good friend Frank LaFranco, W6NEK of Huntington Beach, CA developed a synchronized tracking program that allows the user to see who and where the next tracking beacon will transmit. It was a well developed program and very useful. However, Frank became a Silent Key (SK) two years ago and his website where you could download the FREE program was no longer available. Since then The NCDX club revived the program in a new format and it is free at:

<https://www.ncdxf.org/beacon/index.html>

Hope you can use it in your DX'ing efforts.

73, Bruce, W1ZE





Free 100-foot Rhone tower, antenna & coax still available.

Yes, free if you take it down. The tower is offered by Mark Potter, W1AUX in Newcastle. It was used for the 224.32 MHz W1AUX/R repeater and also a Marine channel system. If you are interested you can contact W1AUX or K1AUX at:

deb@attorney-potter.com.



Shortwave Listening can still be fun

By W1ZE



Back in the dark ages, 1958 to be exact, when I was a young teenager and becoming enamored with all things Radio, I asked my parents for a Knight Kit 'Space Spanner' Shortwave radio that was sold by Allied Radio, known then as Radio Shack.

It was a three tube regenerative receiver that had two bands, broadcast and 6.5 to 17 MHz shortwave. It sold for \$18.95+shipping and for another \$4 you could get a spiffy vinyl covered wooden matching cabinet. Funds from my paper route and lawn mowing just wouldn't cover it and \$25 was big money in the mid 1950s.

Christmas morning 1958 arrived and under the tree was a gift box with my name on it. Upon opening it was just what I wanted, a 'Space Spanner' radio kit. Thanks Santa!

The day after Christmas I was in the workshop with a hot soldering iron and a few other hand tools assembling my kit radio. Three days after Christmas it was built. My dad helped me string up a long wire antenna and I fired it up. A success, no smoke emanating from the radio. After figuring out the correct setting for the regen control I could hear local Los Angeles AM broadcast stations all over the dial. I then switched to the shortwave band and tuned around. The first good signal I heard 'loud' was HCJB in Quito, Equator. My dad and I sat there at my desk listening to that station and others we found for the better part of an hour. That did it, I was now a radio geek, and by 1960 I was a licensed Ham Radio Operator, WV6MUP.



To this day I still like to tune around on the HF bands and listen to foreign broadcast stations. There are not as many as there were back in the 1950s through the 1980s but they are still out there. Big stations like the BBC, CBC and RFE are no longer broadcasting but there are still stations broadcasting in English. Here are a few listings that will help you find a station you may want to listen to on your fancy Japanese or American HF transceiver.

<http://hfradio.org/english/>

<http://www.primetimeshortwave.com/>

Just put the mode switch in 'AM' and start spinning the dial. You may enjoy it.

As an added note, I still have that 57 year old Knight Kit radio and it still works.

73, Bruce Randall, W1ZE

