



THE SIGNAL

Newsletter of the Bella Vista area Radio Club

***Arkansas'
Largest
Amateur
Radio
Club***

- March Program – Contesting From A Teenager's Point Of View
- Chasing The Cheetah – A 15-Park POTA Sprint
- EXPERIMENTER'S CORNER – Parts
- Last Chance to Enroll in Storm Spotter Classes
- 2025 Arkansas QSO Party Coming In May
- Do You Need An Antenna Tuner?
- Logbook of the World Reaches Another Milestone
- Pitcairn Island – Becoming More Active?
- BVRC Special Event Station Getting Close
- DXCC Den – St. Brandon Island

April 2025

Monthly Meetings: 1st Thursdays @ 7 p.m.
Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy (ALETA)
3424 S. Downum Road, Springdale AR
(HAM 101 Workshop for Newcomers @ 6pm preceding meeting)

Club Calls: N5BVA / W5NX
(Repeater Nets) (Contesting & Special Events)

Repeaters: 147.255 +600 khz offset, pl 162.2
444.100 + 5 MHz offset, pl 162.2

Website: www.bellavistaradioclub.org

WEEKLY NETS:

BVRC HAM 101 Net
Tuesdays @ 7 pm on the
WX5NAS Skywarn Link System:

Bentonville - 146.865, -offset, pl 103.5
Springdale - 147.315, +offset, pl 97.4
Fayetteville - 147.315, +offset, pl 110.9
Huntsville - 443.625, +5 MHz, pl 97.4
Green Forest - 145.310, -offset, pl 103.5

BVRC Legacy Net
Wednesdays @ 7 pm on the
BVRC Dual Linked Repeaters:

N5BVA/Bella Vista
147.255, +offset, pl 162.2

N5BVA/Springdale
444.100, +5 MHz, pl 162.2

BVRC 3830 Roundtable
Sunday Afternoons

4 pm during CST
4:30 pm during CDT
3.830 MHz



NEXT BVRC MONTHLY MEETING

Thursday, April 3, 2025 @ 7pm
Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy
3424 S. Downum Road
Springdale, AR

April Meeting Information

HAM 101 Workshop, 6pm preceding monthly meeting – Our April Workshop will feature a special member and operator of BVRC, Kathy Bromley – WQ5T. Kathy's topic will be the Long Island CW Club. Kathy was first licensed in 2000 as KD5KJQ. In 2020, she then upgraded to General, then to Amateur Extra. In January 2023, she became interested in learning and using the code and enrolled in the Long Island CW Club. Since that time, she has pursued a path of excellence resulting in her currently operating at 20 words per minute. Kathy will be sharing what LICW is, does, how it has benefitted her, and how it can help you learn the code.

BVRC April meeting, 7pm – BVRC welcomes yet another very special guest speaker for April, as ARRL Volunteer Monitor Program Administrator Riley Hollingsworth – K4ZDH. Riley will be speaking to us on a premier topic for the club – amateur radio monitoring, enforcement, and commendation. The ARRL Volunteer Monitor program is a formal agreement between the FCC and ARRL. Volunteers trained and vetted by ARRL monitor the airwaves and collect evidence that can be used both to correct misconduct or recognize exemplary on-air operation. Cases of flagrant violations are referred to the FCC by the ARRL Volunteer Monitor Program for action in accordance with FCC guidelines. Prior to heading-up this program, Riley served for 10 years as the first person in the FCC's Enforcement Bureau to focus on amateur radio. This unique topic and presentation will be an important element to add to your knowledge arsenal of amateur radio. Riley will be visiting us virtually. Don't miss this great evening of important information. **SEE YOU THEN!**



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Our Amateur Radio Hobby: The Pathway to Becoming a Lifelong Learner

The Bella Vista Radio Club works hard to promote our wonderful hobby to new generations of enthusiasts. Indeed, our club includes several members under ten years of age. On the other hand, our membership also includes several members who are less than a decade away from the century mark in age. This month's

President's Message is for those of us who are inching closer to that latter group than the former.

When I first became licensed as an amateur radio operator in my early twenties, learning all about the amateur radio hobby, studying for my license and learning to operate my radios came easy. As a young person, I was a sponge, easily soaking up knowledge about all facets of our hobby. Now, many decades later, learning anything new, including new developments in our amateur radio hobby, presents more of a challenge!

The paradox is this – while new learning is more of a challenge as we age, it is the very act of challenging ourselves to continue learning new things that keeps our minds engaged, active and fresh. This is one of the benefits and joys of continuing our journey through amateur radio. With all the exciting and new innovations and growing technologies in our hobby, we become Lifelong Learners. Because of our interest in the hobby, we are motivated to continue to grow and learn about all the exciting things our hobby has to offer.

Recently, I challenged myself to grow beyond my comfort zone by just operating SSB communications. Although I still experience that same thrill talking to another person over the radio now as I did when I was first licensed, I felt a curiosity and need to learn about modern digital radio communications.

Learning all about digital “FT8” communications – the science, the software, and hardware technology and the operation protocols – was a new and challenging opportunity for me to expand my amateur radio knowledge and continue along my path through the hobby.

The byproduct for me was that this new adventure and experience was not only exciting and exhilarating, but as a senior citizen, it also demonstrated the benefits to me of being a true Lifelong Learner. Boy, what a wonderful hobby!



From the
President's
Desk

Historical Club Milestone As March Session Features First Presentation By a Teen Operator

The meeting room was once again packed by BVRC members for the March meeting as they all enjoyed a special treat and a BVRC first – a program administered by a teenage ham operator.

Grace Papay – K8LG from Holland, MI was behind the podium with her program “Contesting from a Teenager’s Point of View”, appearing to the club via video hookup. Grace is 19 years of age and in her first year of college, majoring in electrical engineering.



Grace acquired her Technician and General licenses in 2021, then passed the Amateur Extra exam in 2022. In that short period of time from obtaining the top license until now, Grace has accumulated a wealth of operational knowledge in satellite, VHF/UHF, and HF operations.

For examples, Grace has acquired her DXCC and WAS awards, as well as amassing many awards for various ham radio contests such as the ARRL DX Contest, ARRL Sweepstakes, IARU International Contest, and many others. She only lacks 6 grid squares from completing working all 488 grid squares in the 48 contiguous states...all by satellite.

Grace said she enjoys all aspects of operating, but her favorite is working the ham satellites.

Grace's operating knowledge is also attributable to coming from a ham family. Both her dad, K8DP, and her grandfather, K8YSE, have been hams for many years. Her mom, grandmother, and uncle are also ham operators.

Grace's mom acquired her Technician license at the same time as Grace, later participating together in their first ever contest, the ARRL Rookie Roundup, which Grace said was a big thrill for her. Grace has also enjoyed the opportunity of operating from St. Lucia in the Caribbean with her dad.

Grace pictorially shared many of her operating experiences, and encouraged all club members (especially our members of the younger generation) to get involved with BVRC's club activities, as well as pursuing an exciting operational path of their own. Grace ended her program with a Q&A session from members. It was a great pleasure to have her visit us for an outstanding meeting.



Grace at contest station K3LR



Conducting BVRC program



Grace proudly displays her DXCC award



Receiving the Amateur Radio Newsline 2024 Young Ham of the Year Award



For BVRC's March HAM 101 Workshop, our instructor was BVRC Past President and current Membership Chair Tom Northfell – W5XNA. Tom gave an outstanding presentation to a packed HAM 101 meeting room on Logbook of the World and Club Log, and their vital use in amateur radio record keeping. **THANKS TOM!**



THE BVRC HAM 101 NET



BVRC's flagship net – The BVRC Legacy Net – meets each Wednesday at 7 pm on the BVRC twin linked repeaters, and is the longest running repeater net in NW Arkansas.

However, BVRC also has a net that was created and geared *especially for newcomers to our club and our hobby.*

The HAM 101 Net meets each Tuesday evening at 7:00 pm local time on the WX5NAS Skywarn Link System (repeater frequencies on page 2 of this issue of The Signal).

This is a great place for those new to amateur radio to ask questions and for operators at all experience levels to share knowledge and experience. The purpose of this net is to encourage new ham operators to have fun and gain help on all aspects of amateur radio, as well as learning how a net operates. There is always a panel of Elmers (mentors) on frequency to answer any questions or issues our newcomers have. From radios to antennas, these topics and more are covered and explored. This is a terrific way to increase your ham radio knowledge and explore new areas of the hobby. ***Newcomers, the HAM 101 Net is there for you and waiting to help you.*** So don't be shy – press that mic button and check-in with us! Enjoy some great information! We look forward to hearing you check-in!

BVRC VE REPORT

From Don Cooper – KC7DC
BVRC VE Coordinator
March, 2025



CONGRATULATIONS!

**CHRIS JACOB - KJ5KMH - FAYETTEVILLE
NEW TECHNICIAN!**

**TRISTAN MARSHALL - KJ5KMT - PEA RIDGE
NEW TECHNICIAN!**

**SEAN FLANNERY - KJ5KNE - FAYETTEVILLE
NEW TECHNICIAN!**

**WAYNE PEARSON - KJ5JJO - FAYETTEVILLE
NEW GENERAL!**

Next month's test sessions:

- **April 12, 10 am – Shiloh Museum, 118 W. Johnson Ave, Springdale**
- **April 12, 2 pm – Bella Vista Public Library, 11 Dickens Place, Bella Vista**



CHASING THE CHEETAH: A 15-PARK POTA MAD DASH



By Robert Hill – K5NZV

January 18, 2025 started like most Saturdays - breakfast and conversation with some fellow amateurs at the Silver Spur Restaurant in Jane, Missouri. But this was no normal Saturday. I was about to embark on one of my longest and demanding Parks On The Air activating days so far – a 15-park rove through southwest Missouri and ending in northwest Arkansas.

It was an ambitious undertaking – activating 15 parks in one UTC day. And it was late. Breakfast ended about 9:00 AM, or 15:00 UTC, leaving me nine hours to drive nearly 170 miles, set up and tear down a dozen times, and make at least 10 contacts at each park (not to mention “nature” breaks). I left the restaurant fueled up and ready to start working through my planned list of stops:

Missouri

US-11140 Mount Shira Access State Conservation Area
US-11139 Cowskin Access State Conservation Area
US-11031 Buffalo Hills Natural Area
US-11058 Walter Woods State Conservation Area
US-11845 Wildcat Glade Natural Area
US-11076 Tipton Ford Access State Conservation Area
US-11021 Diamond Grove Prairie State Conservation Area
US-0936 George Washington Carver National Monument
US-11077 Allen Bridge Access State Conservation Area
US-7760 Fort Crowder Conservation Reserve
US-11141 Deep Ford Access State Conservation Area
US-7659 Huckleberry Ridge Conservation Reserve

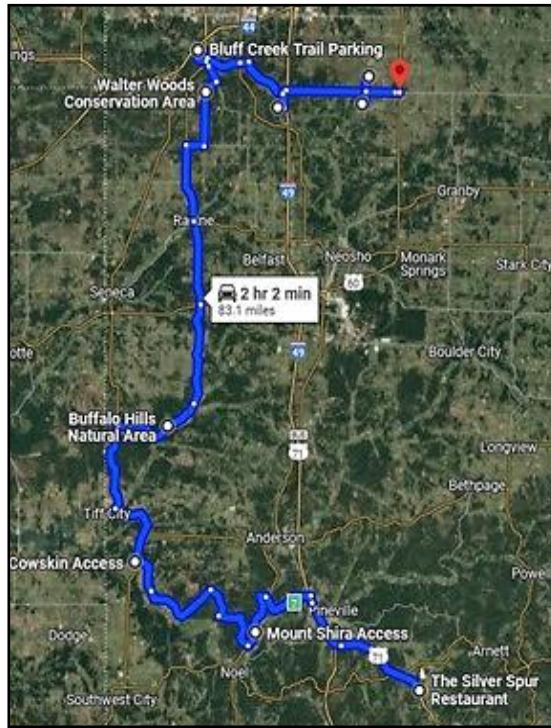
Arkansas

US-0721 Pea Ridge National Military Park
US-9161 Butterfield State Trail
US-9757 Butterfield Overland National
Historic Trail

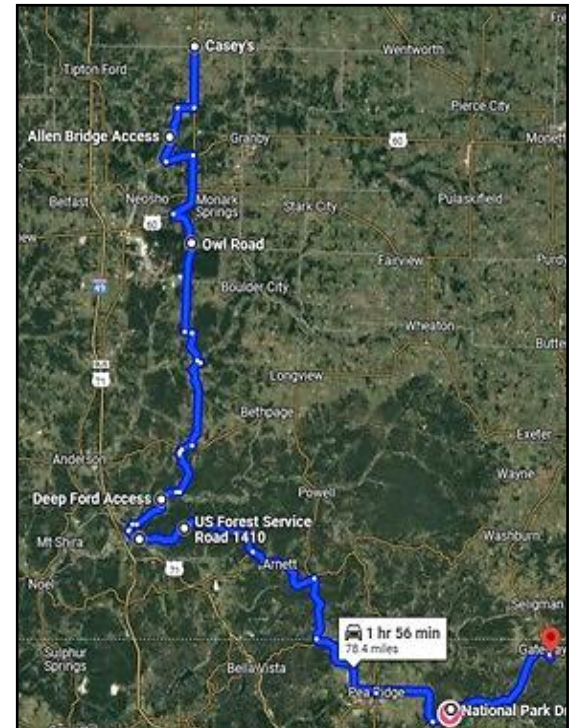
The last three parks were a “three-fer” – inside the Pea Ridge National Military Park boundary and within 100 feet of both the Butterfield State Trail (Highway 62) and the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail. It took a lot of map research (I call it map reconnaissance) to figure out the right spot.



Working in this order would minimize the driving time and maximize the number of parks. The plan was simple - Yaesu FT-857 set up in the truck, vertical antennas (18-foot extendable and hamsticks) with quick disconnects for rapid setup and teardown. Not the type of operation I was unfamiliar with; one of my jobs in the Army years ago was operating a tactical



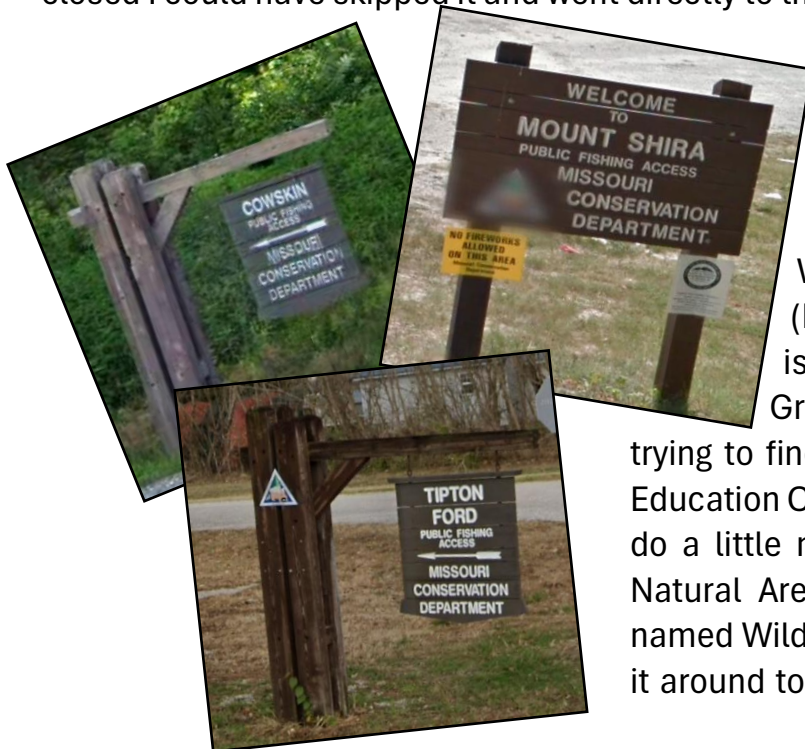
15-Park Route, Part 1



15-Park Route, Part 2

communications jamming team. We became masters of the “jam and scram” out of necessity. Back then, I also learned the benefits of having alternative sites in case one didn’t work out, so I kept a few parks in my back pocket and off the list in case something happened and I needed to adjust the plan.

Through three parks things were going well – Mount Shira, Cowskin, and Buffalo Hills – in about two hours. I was ahead of the pace I had set for myself. But then trouble hit..... Walter Woods was closed. Not just closed - gates chained and locked, and not enough room to safely get off the road to set up and operate. I not only lost the park but some additional driving time as well. Had I known it was closed I could have skipped it and went directly to the next park on the list.



My next stop, Wildcat Glade Natural Area, took a little while to find. I use Google Maps on my phone extensively, and one wrong click can put you miles from where you think you are going. Wildcat Glade Natural Area is not in Google Maps (I checked again while writing this article). There is a Wildcat Access and Wildcat Glades Friends Group. They are not the same. While driving around trying to find it, I stopped at the Shoal Creek Conservation Education Center (I wonder why this is not on the POTA list) to do a little more research. It turns out that Wildcat Glade Natural Area is across Shoal Creek from everything else named Wildcat Glade and is up on a hill. Once I finally made it around to the right place, I made a quick dozen contacts,

took a deep breath, regrouped, and headed out for the next stop.

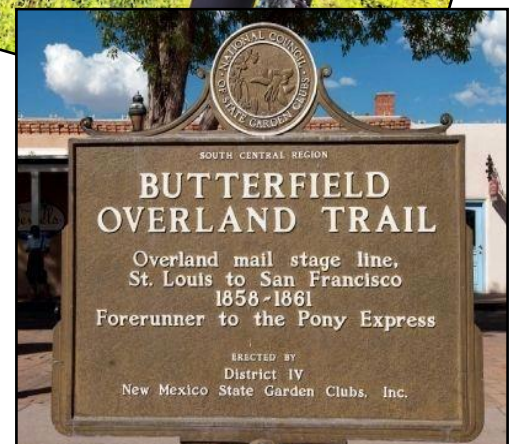
Tipton Ford Access was the first place I encountered some “spectators.” No one was getting out of their cars since it was a cold, windy day but several drove by and looked. I’m sure they were curious - a big brown truck with an 18-foot vertical antenna attached to a front fender. It was also here that the wind started to be a problem and I switched to the hamsticks. The earlier delays had put me behind my pace and the last thing I wanted to deal with was a broken antenna. It also saved a few seconds of set-up time and time was quickly becoming an issue. 00:00 UTC was five and a half hours away with 10 parks to go.

The next few parks were relatively smooth and uneventful - pull up, set up, make the contacts, pack up and move. After George Washington Carver National Monument I swung through Diamond, Missouri, stopped at a Casey’s to grab some lunch (highly recommend the spicy chicken sandwich but watch out for the price), then headed down the highway to Allen Access.

Once Allen Access was complete, it was decision time. Losing Walter Woods had put me one park short of 15, so I had to make it up somewhere. There were a couple of parks in Missouri that were alternatives - US-1750 Big Sugar Creek State Park or US-7669 Flag Spring Conservation Reserve - but these would take me off my route back toward Arkansas and time was getting critical. I still had three to do in Missouri before heading to Pea Ridge to wrap up.



However, there was a two-fer there that, if I could get there in time, would not only make up for the lost park but take me to 16 for the day: US-7164 – Devil’s Eyebrow State Natural Area just east of Gateway, Arkansas. It falls under the jurisdiction of Beaver Lake Wildlife Management Area (US-7262) making it a two-for-one stop. It is just down the road from Pea Ridge National Military Park, so I thought it just might work.



With an updated plan I set out from Allen Access toward Fort Crowder. Nice, paved roads, I made good time, set up and got 10 QSOs quickly. The road to Deep Ford Access was different. More than

20 miles down narrow, one lane dirt roads. Shortest route?...Sure. Fastest?...No. It took longer than anticipated. But once there, I got a fast dozen then moved on to Huckleberry Ridge for the last stop in Missouri. By the time I finished at Huckleberry Ridge I was down to about two hours left to finish the rest of the parks. It was time to move – and fast. Next stop, Pea Ridge National Military Park - 45 minutes away. *This was going to be really, really close.* One thing I haven't mentioned is that there was a contest going on the same weekend - the North American SSB QSO Party. It hadn't really been an issue until the last couple of parks. It was starting to get difficult to find a place to operate on 20 meters (my usual POTA band). The SSB portion of the band was wall to wall with operators. At Pea Ridge, I was able to find an opening big enough to call CQ and pick up an even dozen contacts in 13 minutes. Time - 22:57 UTC. Just over an hour left. Time enough for the last stop.



My go-to place at Devil's Eyebrow is the parking lot for the hiking trail that is just off of Highway 62 east of Gateway, Arkansas. I knew the route and knew where to set up as I had been there several times before both alone and with my XYL Dana W5DGH; we worked it as part of a 10-park rove about a year prior. Getting there and operational was no

problem, but, again, band space was at a premium. I probably spent 10 minutes trying to find a place to call CQ before I decided on a different strategy – hunt and pounce operators working the NAQP. It would create a little extra work after the rove creating a separate log, but the effort was worth the reward. I rolled through the 20 meter band, answering CQs and giving the NAQP exchange - operator name and station location. It took just 12 minutes to get 11 contacts and finish a 16-park sprint at 23:43 UTC - 17 minutes to spare!!!

A few lessons learned:

- Do lots of map research. This helps with routes, activation sites, and potential multi-park locations. I use the park map at pota.app as well as Google Maps, gazetteers, and web sites that you can find at state and federal websites for each park.



- Maximize multi-park stops when possible, but be sure you're familiar with the POTA rules and limitations for multi-park activations
- Take hardcopy maps, such as gazetteers, with you. More than once I was wishing for mine and had forgotten to put them in the truck. Since W5DGH and I are avid hikers we've used DeLorme gazetteers for years. I have Arkansas and Missouri since that's where I mostly operate, but plan on adding Oklahoma and Kansas to the collection.
- Check the websites for the parks you plan on activating. A closed park can derail even the best plan.
- Plan some alternate parks in case you encounter something that doesn't show up in #3.
- Take snacks and meals with you. Road food is great, but can sometimes be hard to find and expensive - you spend a lot of time on back roads with no services.
- Plan for weather (for both you and your equipment) – a broken antenna due to wind can end an operation in a hurry.



I am now the proud possessor of the (hard earned!) POTA Rover Cheetah Award. My next challenge to tackle? The Rover Lion Award - 30 parks in one UTC day! Stay tuned.....





Hear Ye! Hear Ye!
Welcome New
BVRC Members!

Miles Boomer – KJ5ANC – Springdale

Jackson Fine – KJ5KAY – Siloam Springs

Nick Padley – KBØPIN – Bentonville

Sean Flannery – KJ5KNE – Fayetteville

Tristan Marshall – KJ5KMT – Pea Ridge

Chris Jacob – KJ5KMH – Fayetteville

Curtis Haroutunian – N9INK – Summers, AR



It has been reported two resident hams living in the remote backcountry of northern Arkansas have been at odds with each other for years, due to their living in very close proximity to each other. Over the years they have both accumulated well equipped, high power stations but have not been able to fully enjoy the hobby due to gross signal interference with each other.

The bickering finally came to a climax last month when the two decided to meet at a nearby Wal-Mart parking lot in an attempt to resolve the issue.

As the confrontation began and after just a few minutes of discussion, witnesses observed one ham saying to the other, "I've had enough," at which time he pulled a pistol from his vehicle. He then began rapidly firing at the other ham, chasing him through the parking lot. Witnesses reported seeing the armed ham shoot the other ham in the shoulder, then in the leg. They stated he would have shot him again.....but he ran out of water. (Happy April Fool's Day)

EXPERIMENTER'S CORNER

By Bill Durham – KG5ZCI



This month's topic: **PARTS**

One of the most important things in the life of an experimenter is a good collection of parts. This is not something that you acquire overnight, rather it is the product of years of collection. One of my favorite places to get parts is a hamfest. My recent trip to the Russellville hamfest is a great example – actually a better than average example.

It began at the door with a brief conversation with Bill Kennamer – K5FUV. He had a friend (Pat) with an old Hammerlund SP-600 radio that he wanted to give to someone who would restore it. “Give” is the operative word here. It was too heavy to bring into the show so we just had to move it from car trunk to truck bed, two parking spots away. It almost sounds like it was waiting for me. He threw in a 50-amp 12-volt power supply for good measure.

While waiting to connect with this Pat, I was standing next to a vendor who had 5 multi-drawer cabinets for sale. A short “how much, make an offer...” transpired and I got all 5 for \$20. She brought out another 2 and I bought those for \$10. People wanting to get rid of small parts are not uncommon at hamfests and the prices are usually very good, especially a few hours before closing time. The photo below shows the purchases now setting on my workbench.



Did I get anything worth the money? Yes! – The cabinets alone are worth at least double what I spent. There were a lot of little treasures in the drawers as well. The previous owner had an interest in silver mica capacitors which I share.



There were 200 or more capacitors ranging from a few micro-microfarads up to several thousands. Silver mica capacitors are known for their thermal stability and are typically used in frequency sensitive applications, like oscillators. Typically, they are rated in the hundreds of volts range and the failure rate is very low.

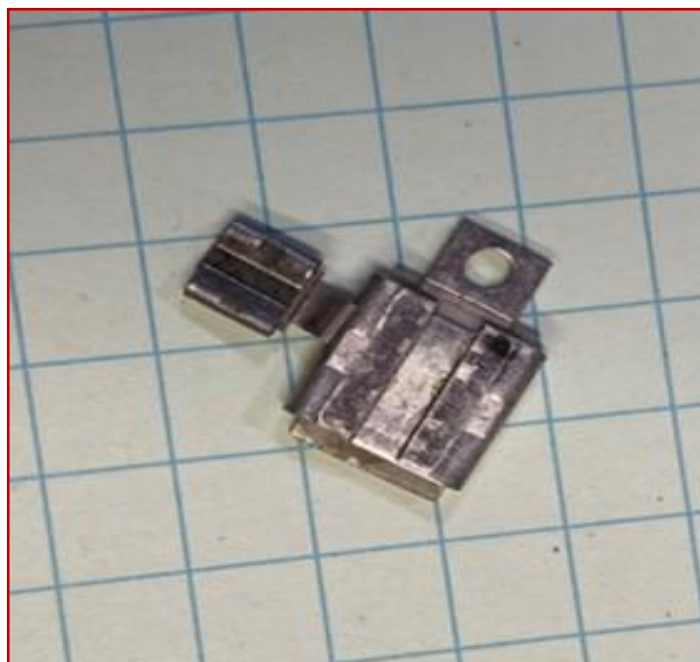
Experimenters should have some type of organization in their parts collection. It's not particularly useful to spend a bunch of time shuffling through your parts collection when you are in the midst of a project. In the photo at left, the collection came with a cabinet well made for small capacitors.

All I needed to do was sort the bunch and make useful labels. I use a Brother label maker with 18 mm white label tape. The sorting always involves throwing out the trash. In my case that means anything that is poorly labeled, has short leads, or has been previously used as evident by solder on the leads. I also gathered up what I already owned and combined the whole collection in the newly arrived cabinet.

Hardware of any kind is among the most valuable finds in such a purchase. I don't mean nuts and bolts, but rather things for mounting components. This kind of hardware can be ridiculously expensive, and it often will upgrade your project both in looks and reliability.

Standoffs can cost a dollar or more each and yet it's difficult to mount a circuit board without them, even though they have no function in the circuit. Sockets, switches, mounting brackets, mica washers, grommets, and terminal strips all go into building an electronic device.

There is a very important educational component that should not be underestimated in a good hamfest find. Capacitors, resistors, inductors and hardware come in an immense variety of forms. Sorting through the treasure will give you a great overview of what is actually out there. If the part looks like an unknown, a bit of research can be very informative. In the Russellville collection, I found a kind of capacitor (in photo at right there are 2 – one small, one large) that I have never seen before and I will be keeping my eye out for places where they are used. They are clearly mica capacitors and may have been used in tuning circuits. The squares in the background are 1/4". Surprisingly, the 1926 Atwater Kent receiver I mentioned last month had a similar but much larger version.



Among the other components in the mix were some new electrolytics. (Photo at left) These are what E-bay would call NOS – new old stock. They were still on the mounting tape (possibly for a Pick-and-Place machine) used for mass production. Electrolytics have a more limited lifetime than other components so some care needs to be exercised when using old stock. However, on the experimenter's bench, trouble shooting is routine and just part of the game.

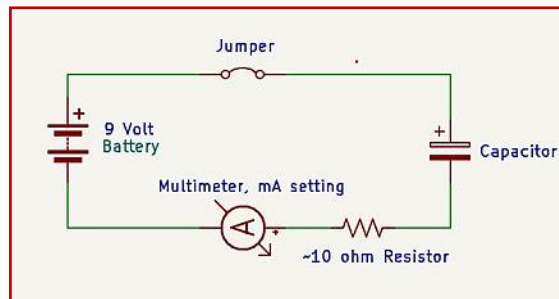
How do you test electrolytics? Well, the capacitor tester that was mentioned in the first article is an obvious choice. However, some care needs to be

exercised in its use with electrolytic capacitors. It appears that the Ruoshui measures the charging rate or more specifically the current flow as a function of time. When a voltage is applied to a capacitor (via the test leads of the meter), there is a large surge current that drops off with time. For capacitors with small capacitance this time can be very short but as the capacitance increases so does the time for the current to fall off, ideally to zero.

The RuoShui makes measurements at user selected frequency. If the frequency is too high the capacitor will not have time to show a decrease in current and the measurement will be in error (very obvious). In my experience, the lowest frequency available works best but a selection of capacitors of known value should be checked just to make sure the readings are in the ballpark. Other meters with a fixed frequency will probably not give reliable results or have a limited capacitance range.

The RuoShui also measures the ESR, short for Equivalent Series Resistance. Good capacitors should have low ESR's, typically less than 1 ohm. I have measured several in the 0.1 or less range. If a capacitor is open, leaky and or will not hold a charge the ESR will be high.

You can do a similar measurement with any multimeter that will measure current. Simply take a 9 volt battery and a 10 ohm resistor and place the meter, capacitor, and resistor in series across the battery.



When the circuit is closed (use a jumper wire to complete the circuit) you will see the meter jump to high current then decline to an immeasurably low current in a few seconds. If all goes as indicated, the capacitor is good. The resistor limits the surge current and is not critical, anything in the 5 to 30 ohm range is fine.

There are some arguments on the web (see Mr. Carlson's Lab) that suggest that the voltage applied should be close to the operating voltage. Nine volts is adequate for experiments involving transistors or integrated circuits. Electrolytics used in tube circuits may have voltage ratings of several hundred volts and this experiment becomes impractical and dangerous when the applied voltage is this high. I have done the experiment with 30 volts safely. My rule of thumb is simple: If the part is in an old tube radio and part of the power supply, just replace it.

Another place to build-up a parts collection is by taking things apart and salvaging what you can. This is also one of the best educational activities an experiment can do. Recently, I removed three beautiful Sprague electrolytics from a piece made by Hewlett Packard. This was a laboratory grade instrument and probably cost thousands when new. I measured the capacitance of each with the RuoShui at 100 Hz. All three were within 10% of the rated value, 3900 ufd at 50 VDC, and all three had ESR's less than 0.05 ohms. The final test was to charge one up with 9 volts and then discard it with a jumper wire. A good loud bang was the result of that experiment. This experiment clearly demonstrated that the capacitor could hold a charge over several minutes. I will not hesitate to put these into service when the time comes.





Register Now for Final Spring Storm Spotting Classes

The National Weather Service in-person storm spotter classes for northwest Arkansas have now concluded for this year. However, if you missed the in-person training sessions and would still like to attend a class, there are two *virtual* spotter classes that will be held in April that you can avail yourself to.

The dates are Tuesday, April 1, and Monday, April 7. The classes will begin at 6:30 pm. Pre-registration is required.

Storm spotters provide first-hand severe weather reports to their local officials and to the National Weather Service in Tulsa, which are used to make critical warning decisions. Being a storm spotter not only means dedication but also training. The goal of the training is not just to recognize tornadoes, but to have some understanding of storm structure, which in turn better prepares the spotter for the extreme and unusual circumstances. Other weather related topics are also covered.

If you wish to register for one of the remaining virtual classes, you can complete the registration form for April 1 here.

For the April 7 class, click here.



ARE YOU USING THE QSL BUREAUS?



If you have begun the quest in searching for, working, and confirming DX countries, most of your confirmations will be via the electronic method (Logbook of the World). However, eventually you're going to have to deal with exchanging hard copy QSL cards to get a confirmation, because many foreign amateurs still use them. But hey! – You're going to end up with some great memorabilia and great conversation pieces with QSL cards.

Do you know how to do this? Do you know if you have DX QSL cards at your incoming QSL bureau? Do you have funds/envelopes on file so that your QSL bureau sorter can mail them to you? Everything you need to know about incoming and outgoing QSL bureaus can be found at: www.arrl.org/qs-service.

If you are a new ham and new member of BVRC and want full information on how to get QSO confirmations, you can go to the July 2024 issue of The Signal and view an article on this topic on page 23.

Click here.



THE 2025 ARKANSAS QSO PARTY IS GETTING CLOSE



Join in on the fun & excitement !!!

Each year on the 3rd Saturday in May, the state of Arkansas takes center stage in the amateur radio world, as hams from all over the globe tune the bands to make a QSO with one of the fine hams in our great state. **This year's Arkansas QSO Party date is May 17.**

Whether non-Arkansas stations are pursuing their Worked-All-States award, needing a particular county or counties, or just enjoying operating in our annual event, they know that Arkansas is a fairly rare state to be found and worked, no matter if they are a stateside or DX operator. So, they will be scanning the bands for Arkansas stations – YOU.

Each year The Noise Blankers Radio Group is the sponsor of The Annual Arkansas QSO Party. NBRG promotes the ARQP by keeping all national journals and major ham radio websites updated on the event, and maintaining the ARQP website.

Even though it *is technically* a contest, non-contesters return each year to enjoy meeting new friends while operating in the annual event at their own pace and leisure. If you've never operated in an Arkansas QSO Party, give it a try this year! For returning participants.....see you on the bands!!!

The Noise Blankers Radio Group station – callsign WR5P – will be the Bonus Station for this year's ARQP.

For more info & 2025 ARQP rules:
www.arkqp.com

Do You Need An Antenna Tuner?

Maybe yes, maybe no.
It all depends on the type of
antenna and feedline you are using.

By ARRL noted author Steve Ford, WB8IMY

There is a great cloud of mythology surrounding antenna tuners, particularly when the conversation turns to what they can and cannot do. Make no mistake, they are useful devices in the right applications. The trick is deciding whether you need one!

When Rigs and Antenna Systems Disagree

Every antenna has an *impedance* expressed in *ohms*. The same is true of the feed line you use to connect your transceiver to the antenna. Impedance sounds like a complicated beast and, to a certain extent, it is. In simplest terms, it is a combination of *inductive reactance*, *capacitive reactance* and garden-variety *resistance*.

It's probably best to avoid a long discussion about the meaning of reactance. If I had several more pages to devote to this article, I'd be more than happy to bore you to tears with reactance theory. For our purposes, think of reactance as opposition to the flow of an ac signal in a circuit. In the case, the AC is the RF generated by your transceiver and the circuit is your antenna system. File this idea away for the moment. We'll come back to it later.

Meanwhile back at the radio ranch.....

The impedance of the antenna depends on a number of factors, including the length, operating frequency, height above ground, proximity of metal objects and even weather conditions (such as ice on the antenna). The impedance of the feed line depends on how the cable is constructed.

Your feed line does more than simply connect

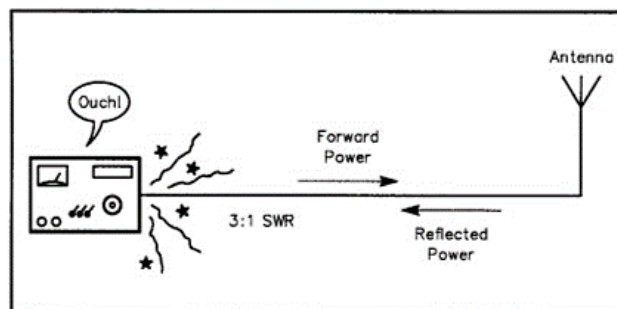


Fig. 1 – Most transceivers are designed to expect an antenna system impedance of 50 ohms. When the antenna impedance is something other than 50 ohms, a transmission line mismatch occurs and a portion of the RF power is reflected back to the radio. *Standing waves* are created in the feed line and high RF voltages can develop. when the *standing wave ratio* becomes higher than 3:1, your transceiver may be damaged.

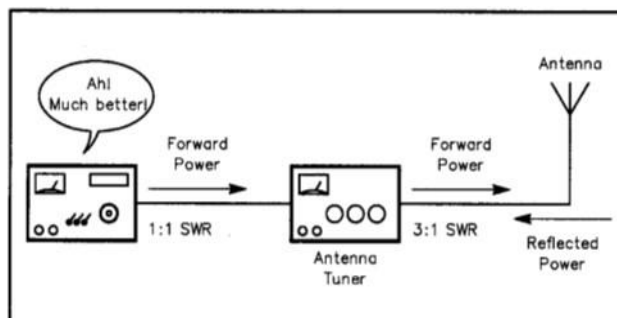


Fig. 2 – By using an antenna tuner, you can adjust the impedance your transceiver "sees" to a hospitable 50 ohms. The antenna mismatch to the line still exists, but the tuner protects your radio from RF voltages while allowing it to develop its maximum output.

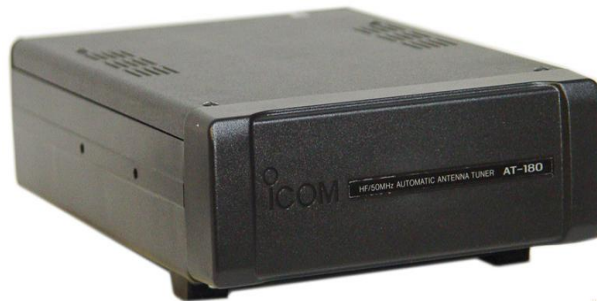
your radio to your antenna. It acts as an impedance *transformer*. That is, the impedance of your antenna is transformed by the feed line into the value your radio “sees” when you connect it to the cable. This *system impedance* acts as a *load* for the energy created by your radio – just like a light bulb is a load for the energy supplied by a battery.

Most amateur transceivers are designed to work with a load impedance of 50 ohms. When your radio sees an impedance of 50 ohms, or something close to it, you’re on easy street. You press the mike switch, close the CW key or type on your keyboard and all is right with the world.

But what happens when the impedance *isn’t* 50 ohms? Now you have a situation known as a *mismatch*.

When a mismatch exists, a certain portion of the power generated by your radio is *reflected* – like light is reflected by a mirror. This reflected power comes shooting back down the cable to your radio. When it reaches the radio, it is reflected back to the antenna. The reflected power combines with the *forward* power being generated at the radio to create standing waves in the feed line.

By using a standing-wave-ratio (SWR) meter, you can measure both the forward and reflected



power. A 1:1 SWR reading indicates that no power is being reflected back to your radio. This is good. On the other hand, an SWR of 3:1 or more means that a substantial amount of power is being reflected. This is usually bad. (Don’t you love these simple concepts?)

A high SWR can cause considerable RF voltages to develop in the feed line and in the output circuits of your radio. This is a dangerous condition for your rig – especially if it is modern solid-state transceiver. To prevent this, many radios manufactured within the last 20 years or so include SWR protection circuits. When the SWR gets too high, these circuits automatically reduce the output power or, in some cases, shut down the transceiver altogether (See Fig. 1). Older tube radios are much more forgiving, but even they can be damaged when operated under high SWR conditions.

If your antenna system presents a serious mismatch to your radio, what can you do? If you connect your transceiver directly, the protection circuitry will drop your output like a rock. Worse yet, you may find yourself on the receiving end of an expensive repair bill. You

need to provide a 50-ohm load for your transceiver – regardless of what is really present. One way to accomplish that is with an antenna tuner.

How Does An Antenna Tuner Work?

In its most basic form, an antenna tuner is simply a network of variable inductors (coils) and capacitors. By adjusting the coils and capacitors, you counterbalance and cancel the efforts of the inductive and capacitive reactance at the *transceiver* end of the feed line. (Now you know why I bothered to bring up the subject of reactance in the first place!) as the reactances are canceled, the impedance at the transceiver is transformed to 50 ohms (See Fig. 2). As far as your transceiver is concerned, the load impedance is matched and it's free to dump all of its power into the antenna system

I bet a number of you are saying to yourselves, "Wait a minute! The impedance at the transceiver side, but it's still some other value at the antenna side. All you've done is shift the mismatch problem from the transceiver to the tuner!"

You're right. The mismatch still exists, but now it's at the output of the antenna tuner instead of the transceiver. By using the tuner, we're protecting the radio while still allowing it to develop maximum output. If the tuner is well designed, it should be able to handle the RF voltages and currents caused by high SWR.

Of course, the reflected power is still bouncing back and forth between the antenna tuner and the antenna. Some of the power is lost in the feed line. If you're using low-loss feed line however, most of it is radiated at your antenna. In the meantime, your transceiver is happy and you're happy. Who could ask for more?



Use An Antenna Tuner If.....

- *You want to feed your antenna with open-wire line.*
Open-wire line (or ladder line) offers extremely low loss at HF frequencies (much better than coaxial cable). One problem is that open-wire line is *balanced* while your transceiver's output is *unbalanced*. You need to use an antenna tuner with a built-in *balun* to form a bridge between the balanced line and the unbalanced output of your radio. A balun is a type of transformer that converts balanced feed lines to unbalanced, or vice versa. (**BAL**anced to **UN**balanced. Get it?) Most antenna tuners use 4:1 baluns that also convert the impedance of open-wire feed lines to a value that the tuner can handle.
- *You want to operate your antenna on bands other than those it was designed for.*
When you attempt to use, for example, a 40-meter dipole on 10 meters, a big mismatch will develop, along with a high SWR. By using an antenna tuner, you may be able to create a 1:1 SWR at your transceiver. (I say "may" because the mismatch can sometimes be so great that it is beyond the capability of your tuner to handle.) the high SWR may cause substantial loss in a coaxial feed line, but at least you'll radiate *some* power at the antenna.

- *Your antenna has a narrow SWR bandwidth on some bands.*
Some type of multi-band antennas do not offer low SWRs from one end of each band to the other. There is usually a range – expressed in kilohertz – where an SWR below 2:1 can be achieved. For example, a multi-band trap dipole may offer as SWR of 2:1 or less from 3600-3800 kHz. That's an SWR bandwidth of 200 kHz. If you try to operate above 3800 kHz or below 3600 kHz, you'll encounter an SWR higher than 2:1 and your radio may become displeased. With an antenna tuner, you can operate outside the SWR bandwidth and still load the full output of your radio into the antenna system.



Don't Bother With An Antenna Tuner If.....

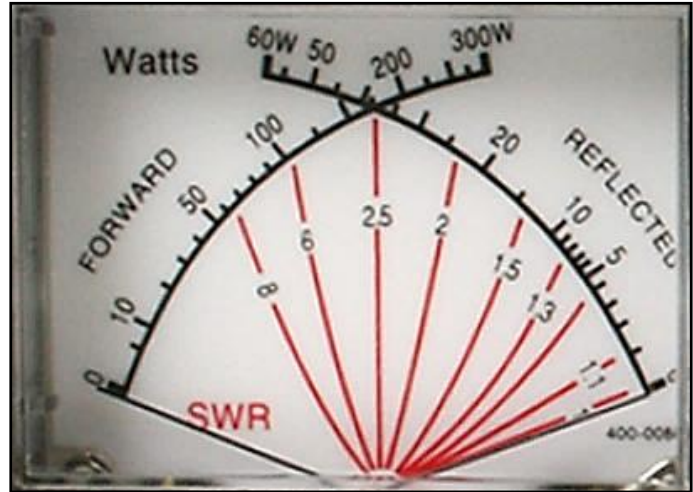
- *Your SWR is 1.5:1 or less at the frequencies you operate most often.*
An SWR of 1.5:1 or less is not serious and does not require the assistance of an antenna tuner. Most modern rigs will tolerate a 1.5:1 SWR just fine. In fact, many will be happy at an SWR of 2:1. If you are using a good-quality feed line, the loss caused at an SWR of 1.5:1 or even 2:1 isn't enough to worry about at HF frequencies. Many hams are obsessed with providing an absolute 1:1 SWR for their radios at all times. Apparently they also have money to burn!
- *You have a high SWR at VHF or UHF frequencies.*
VHF/UHF antenna tuners are available, but my advice is to save your money. Remember that an antenna tuner massages the antenna system impedance *at the transceiver*. The mismatch still exists and the SWR is still high at the antenna side of the tuner. Even the best coaxial cables have significant losses at VHF and UHF when SWR is high. A VHF/UHF antenna tuner will make your radio happy, but most of its power will never make it to the antenna. The best approach is to correct the mismatch at the antenna by adjust whatever tuning mechanism it provides. If the antenna cannot be tuned, check the cable for defects and make sure you've installed the antenna properly.
- *You're interfering with TVs, telephones, computers, and other appliances in your neighborhood.*
Despite what you may have heard, an antenna tuner will not necessarily cure your interference problems. It's true that most antenna tuners will reduce the level of *harmonic radiation* (signals your radio generates in addition to the ones you want), and if the interference is being caused by harmonics, a tuner may help. Most interference, however, is caused by RF energy that is picked up indirectly by cables or wires, or directly by the device itself. By using an antenna tuner, you'll probably radiate more energy at the antenna than you did before. That may make your interference problem worse!

Looking For Mr. Goodtuner

So, you've decided that you need an antenna tuner after all. Antenna tuners come in all shapes and sizes. What features should you consider?

- **A Built-In SWR meter** – An SWR meter of some type is a must if you want to use an antenna tuner. When adjusting your tuner, you need to keep an eye on the *reflected power* indicator. Your goal is to reduce the reflected power to zero – or at least as close as you can get. When the reflected power is zero, the SWR is 1:1 at your transceiver.

Many tuners feature built-in meters. If not, you can purchase an SWR meter separately. Your radio may even have its own SWR meter.



- **A Roller or Tapped Inductor** – More expensive tuners feature a variable coil called a *roller inductor*. As you turn the front panel inductor knob, the coil inside the tuner rotates. A metal wheel rolls along the coil like a train on a railroad track. As the wheel moves along the coil, the inductance increases or decreases.

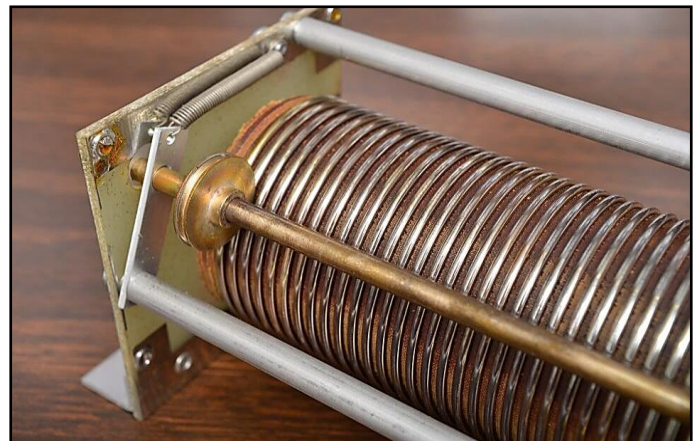


Fig. 3 – This is a typical roller inductor. Notice the wheel that rolls along the coil windings. As the wheel moves, the inductance changes.

Less expensive tuners do not use roller inductors. Instead, there is a coil with wires attached at various points. On the front panel, a rotary switch selects the wires. According to how the inductor is wired in the circuit, selecting one *tap* or another varies the inductance. This is known as a *tapped inductor*.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches. Roller inductors offer the best tuning performance, but they are subject to the woes of mechanical wear and tear. For example, if corrosion builds up on the wheel or the coil windings, the electrical quality of the connection will deteriorate. Roller inductors are also cumbersome to use. You may have to twist the control many times when moving from one band to another.



Fig. 4 – Tapped inductors have wires attached at various points. By selecting a particular wire, you get a fixed amount of inductance.

Tapped inductors are easy to use and free of mechanical problems (unless the

switches get dirty). However, you may find that they restrict the operating range of your tuner. When you turn the switch, you select a *fixed* amount of inductance. You can't easily change it to tune a particularly difficult mismatch situation.

- **A Built-In Balun** – If you intend to use an open-wire feedline, buy a tuner with a built-in 4:1 balun. These baluns often dissipate quite a bit of heat, so always choose a large balun over a small one.

- **Multiple Antenna Capability and Dummy Loads** – Some tuners offer the ability to connect more than one antenna. This is hand in all sorts of applications. Let's say you have a vertical antenna for 40-10 meters and a wire dipole for 80 meters. You can connect both feed lines to your tuner and easily switch between them.

Built-in dummy loads are convenient, but not necessary. A dummy load is a resistor (or group of resistors) that absorbs the output of your transceiver while allowing very little energy to radiate. It's used for making transmitter adjustments and other tests. If your tuner lacks a dummy load, you can purchase one separately.

- **Automatic Operation** – Most transceiver manufacturers offer *automatic* antenna tuners. These tuners are usually built in the radio itself, or they're offered separately. Automatic tuners are convenient when you need to change bands or frequencies quickly. You simply push a button and your tuner adjusts its coils and capacitors to achieve the lowest SWR. Some automatic tuners sense when you've changed frequency and will readjust immediately! (You don't have to lift a finger.)

Automatic antenna tuners are expensive and their tuning range is limited. If your operating style requires you to jump from band to band rapidly (contesting is one scenario), consider an automatic tuner



Fig. 5 – A built-in balun in an MFJ tuner.

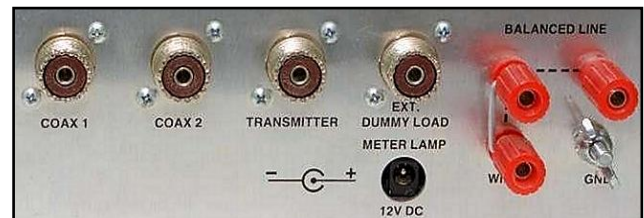


Fig. 6. – Rear panel of an antenna tuner with multiple outputs for two different types of antennas, a dummy load, and a balanced line antenna.



Fig. 7. – An example of an automatic antenna tuner would be the HF 120-watt mAT-180H. LDG is another leading manufacturer which makes many different models at different power handling levels. (See bottom image on first page of this article.)

scenario), consider an automatic tuner. Otherwise, conserve your cash and invest in a manual tuner.

● **A Word About Power Ratings** – If your transceiver produces only 50 or 100 watts of power, a 200- or 300-watt tuner should do the trick, right? Well...yes and no. Remember what we said about mismatches causing high RF voltages in the tuner? If you're trying to use your tuner in a high-SWR situation, the RF voltages at the tuner may cause an unpleasant phenomenon known as *arcing*. That's when the RF energy literally jumps the gaps between the capacitor plates or coil windings. When your tuner arcs, you'll hear a snapping or buzzing noise. The reflected power meter will fluctuate wildly. Interference to your TV and other devices will increase dramatically. You may even see brilliant flashes of light inside your tuner!

Arcing is obviously bad news for your tuner. It's your tuner's way of saying, "Stop! I can't handle this mismatch!" There are two cures for arcing: reduce your output until it stops, or get a tuner with a higher power rating.

High-power tuners use large capacitors and coils. The gaps between the plates and windings are greater, making it more difficult for an arc to occur. If you can afford it, you're always better off buying a tuner with a 1.5 kW rating or better. (The exception is QRP operating where you're running low power levels.) A hefty tuner costs more, but it will serve you well in the long run.



Fig. 8. – The Palstar AT5K would be an excellent (and expensive) example of a high power handling tuner. It is rated to handle up to 3500 watts. -- The MSRP is \$1495.00. (There are also less expensive tuners in this class.)

The tower of Glenn – WB5L has been taken down and donated to BVRC. We will never forget Glenn's timeless gift to the club and wish him the best in his new life in Tennessee.

This tower, tri-band antenna, and other antennas will be relocated to BVRC's meeting location, the Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy. There they will be stored. We are hopeful the tower and antennas can be erected for use by BVRC for club meeting demonstrations and training. *And of course, a **HUGE** "thank you!" goes out to the BVRC members who worked to take down the donated tower from WB5L's QTH:*

**THANK
YOU**

Chuck Korzendorfer – KM5G, Project Manager
Tem Moore – N5KWL, Project Manager

Dale Locander – W5DSL
Joe Hott – W5AEN
Dana Widboom – KI5TGY

and Jan Hagan – WB5JAN

Brandon Gage – KJ5IOP
Lanna Gage – Brandon's XYL
Tom Thibeault – KN4SLP



With antennas now removed from the tower,
KM5G and N5KWL
prepare to lower the first section



The ground crew lowered each section
with a gin pole and pulley

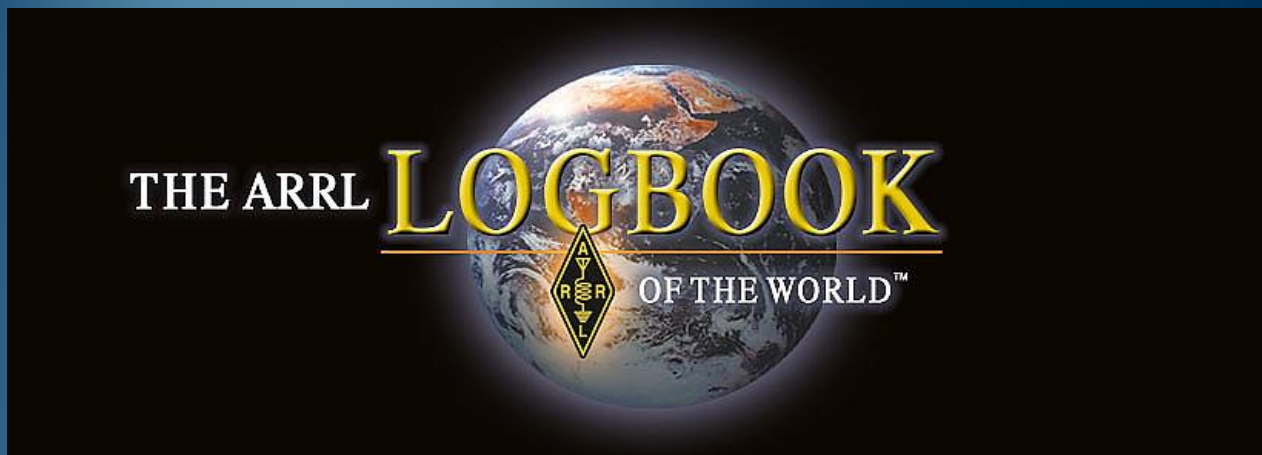
(Photos courtesy WB5JAN)



The tower dismantling crew are all smiles
after a vigorous afternoon of tower lowering. Great job, folks!



ARRL Logbook of the World Tops 2 Billion QSO Records



Recently, ARRL's Logbook of the World attained the major milestone of logging more than *2 billion* contact records.

Currently, LotW has 277,265 users in all 340 DXCC entities, and 75% of all DXCC applications are filed via LotW.

Now, there's not a thing wrong with confirming a QSO for awards credit (such as DXCC, WAS, WPX, etc.) using the good ol' hard-copy QSL card. Many folks still love collecting them, and rightly so! However, if you're wanting a quicker confirmation method (provided both you and the station you contacted both upload the QSO), LotW is much faster, there's no postage involved, and it's FREE to anyone who wants to use it – ARRL member or not. (You do have to be a member to apply for and receive awards when you qualify.) ARRL has invested tens of thousands of dollars in this record keeping program and it has really paid-off.

If you've never used LotW, but are interested in beginning to use it and do not know how to start, submit an ELMER 911 request on the BVRC website (click [here](#)), and one of our elmer mentors will help you out.



BVRC POTA & Special Event Station Just Around the Corner!

The Bella Vista area Radio Club leadership team announces a Parks On The Air and Special Event Station day for all club members!

**Where: J.B. & Johnelle Hunt Family Ozark Highlands Nature Center
3400 N. 40th Street, Springdale AR**

When: Saturday, April 19, 2025 – Event runs from 9am-6pm, local time



This special club event will be two-fold: 1) A Special Event Station celebrating the 5th anniversary of the nature center, and 2) The activation of this Parks On The Air park (POTA # US-11951). There will be two modes: SSB and FT8. There will be three stations running, two on SSB and one on FT8. ANY club member can operate regardless of their license class (Technicians – here's your chance for some HF fun!) The club call W5NX will be used for this event.

Food will be provided for lunch, but bring your choice of beverage (non-alcoholic). Aside from the operating fun, you can tour the beautiful nature center which is administered by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. **ADMISSION IS FREE!** Mark your calendar now and we'll see you there!





DX NEWS: PITCAIRN ISLAND MAY BE EASIER TO WORK IN THE FUTURE



From Don – K5DB

(Portions of this article courtesy of ARRL)

For any BVRC DX enthusiast, we all know Pitcairn Island, overall, isn't that plentiful on the ham bands. Currently only about 50 people live on the island, including only one active ham. It still remains on the Club Log Most Wanted List top 100, currently at #71. It is semi-rare, but not impossible to work and confirm. Many of us have worked it on several bands and modes, thanks to the DXpeditions that have gone there in the past decade or so. However, there are constantly new BVRC members becoming interested in DXing and beginning their quest for the DXCC award and endorsements, who have not as yet worked and confirmed Pitcairn.

Pitcairn is also exciting to work (and get a QSL card in the mail for!) especially for its historical significance, and because of its extreme isolation in the south Pacific Ocean.



Location of Pitcairn Island

Pitcairn made history in 1789 when Fletcher Christian and a group of mutineers commandeered the British vessel HMS Bounty, captained by William Bligh. The history of this mutiny is extensive. So, here is the abridged story:

The Bounty had sailed to Tahiti to pick up and transport breadfruit plants from there to British settlements in the West Indies. While in Tahiti, many of the Bounty's crew became romantically involved with the native Tahitian women and became disinterested and apathetic about the British admiralty's orders and the mission of the voyage.

After departing Tahiti with the breadfruit plants onboard and bound for the West Indies, 9 crew members chose Christian along with "second in command" John Adams to lead a mutiny, take over the vessel, and set Bligh and his small group of dedicated followers adrift in a longboat to fend for themselves. They then returned to Tahiti to pick up their Tahitian women and depart with them and a few male Tahitians as 'scab' crewmembers to search for a place to settle and live out their lives. They attempted to settle different islands in the South Pacific, but were unsuccessful in that the islands were either not topographically suited to live on, or were already inhabited by hostile natives.



Capt. William Bligh



Fletcher Christian

Christian then discovered, from Bligh's logs in the captain's quarters, that an island known as 'Pitcairn' had been reported in 1767 but its exact location was never verified. After months of searching, Christian rediscovered the island on January 15, 1790, 188 nautical miles east of its recorded position. This longitudinal error contributed to the mutineers' decision to settle on Pitcairn.

On arrival, the ship was unloaded and stripped of most of its masts and spars for use on the island. It was then set ablaze and destroyed on January 23rd as a precautionary measure against discovery, as they knew the Admiralty would be searching for them as traitors and mutineers. They knew there was now no means of escape, as Pitcairn – along with Bouvet, Peter 1, and Heard to name a few – is one of the most isolated islands on earth.



**The mutiny –
Bligh and followers being set adrift in a longboat**

Bligh and his men did make it back to civilization, returned to England, and reported the incident to the Admiralty. A court martial was held. For the results of the tribunal, you can go to many historical websites that will give you the full account of the voyage, mission, mutiny, and outcome. In essence, Bligh was exonerated.



Back on Pitcairn, the island proved an ideal haven for the mutineers – uninhabited and virtually inaccessible, with plenty of food, water, and fertile land. For a while, the mutineers and Tahitians existed peaceably. Christian settled down with his wife Isabella, and they had several children together. Unfortunately though, Christian's authority as leader gradually diminished, and he became prone to long periods of brooding and introspection.

Gradually, tensions and rivalries arose over the increasing extent to which the Europeans regarded the Tahitians as their property, in particular the women who were "passed around from one 'husband' to the other". In September 1793, matters degenerated into extreme violence, when several of the mutineers – possibly including Christian – were killed by the Tahitians in a series of murders.

To conclude this brief synopsis of the Bounty mutiny, because of Pitcairn's very dubious location, it wasn't until 1814 when two British warships, HMS Briton and HMS Tagus, chanced upon Pitcairn. Among those who greeted them were Thursday October Christian (Fletcher and Isabella's firstborn child). Upon ferrying from the ships to the island, on shore they found a population of 46 mainly young islanders led by John Adams. Adams had evaded murder by the Tahitians by becoming fair and trustworthy to them, and upon whom the islanders' welfare was wholly dependent, according to the captain's report. After receiving the Briton's and Tagus' report, the Admiralty decided to take no action.

One of the more world renowned operators on Pitcairn for decades was Tom Christian – VP6TC, who became known as "the voice of Pitcairn". He was a long-time radio amateur being first licensed in 1957, lifelong resident of Pitcairn, and is interred there. He passed away in 2013 with possible Alzheimer's disease. The Member of the British Empire (M.B.E.) honor was bestowed upon him. His ham shack was on the highest point of the island (of course!). He was the great-great-great grandson of mutineer Fletcher Christian. During his lifetime, many said that along with the late King Hussein of Jordan – JY1, he was the most popular contact in the ham radio world.



Tom Christian – VP6TC



Former shack of VP6TC

In today's world, with only about 50 residents on the island, there are no hotel facilities, so some residents provide homestays, which are the most common lodging option, complete with meals and laundry service. (Which is very handy due to the fact if you visit Pitcairn, you'll be there for 2 weeks because the only supply ship's schedule to the island is semi-monthly.) There are also a few cabins for rent.

Adamstown is the only town on the island, and it has a well-equipped food store. Most of the food is locally produced. The rest is imported to the store. There is also a hardware store, museum, church, school, and public square with a meeting hall. The natives either walk or use All Terrain Vehicles to get around the island. There are hiking trails and back roads with scenic views. Fishing on the island is excellent. Even though Pitcairn is remote, homes have hot and cold running water and electricity. A solar farm powers the entire island. There is internet via Starlink, so Wi-Fi is available. Most of the islanders are excellent craftsmen and sell carvings and other items, along with delicious honey. The residents are very friendly. Hence, it is no surprise that Pitcairn's main "industry" is tourism.

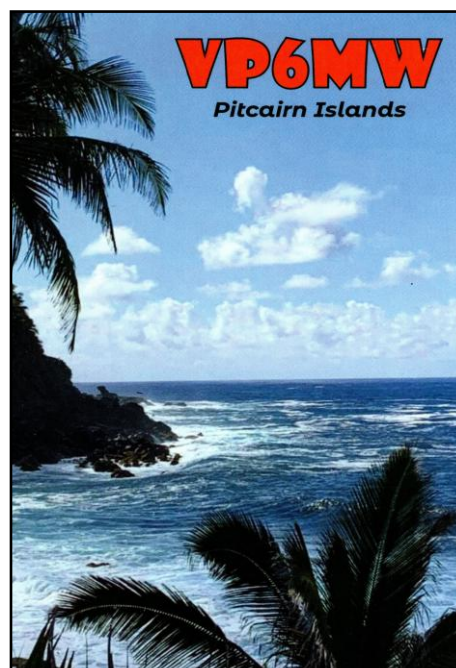
As was stated earlier, there is presently only one native amateur operator on Pitcairn. I have worked her several times, but her presence on the ham bands is fairly erratic. When she is on the air, she handles the pileups very well. Her name is Meralda Warren, call sign VP6MW. (In recent years, I think she inherited the "Voice of Pitcairn mantle" from Tom Christian, VP6TC.)



Meralda – VP6MW

However, for DX newcomers and for those still needing Pitcairn on various bands and modes, a very interesting story is beginning to shape up:

In 2023 Mike Collis – WA6SVT from Crestline, CA and his family went on vacation to Pitcairn. Mike went through the proper channels and procedure to be assigned a Pitcairn Island call sign, which he says was pretty easy. He was issued the call VP6MC ("MC" being his initials, of course).



MY QSL from Meralda



Mike – VP6MC and family

Mike states:

“Our trip was primarily a family vacation and not a DXpedition, but I had enough time to enjoy making many contacts all over the world. Even with my simple station, signals were Q5 with very strong signals during the evening, and the noise was very low. The hardest part of operating for me was the pileups! There were so many stations calling at the same time. I should have used a split frequency scheme. My new friend, Meralda Warren – VP6MW, said pileups are very common for her.

As it turns out, the VP6A DXpedition to Ducie Island (about 310 miles east of Pitcairn) overlapped the first few days of our trip and they stopped by Pitcairn before heading home. We had a great time, with a lot of sites to explore and things to do, in addition to Pitcairn Island being the best radio location I have ever operated from!

To my surprise, I had the option of retiring 2 years early, so I took it, and now my family and I have begun the process of obtaining permanent residence on Pitcairn Island. Our family now has settlement visas and in 2 years, if it all works out for us, we may be granted permanent residency. We still have our California residence and will decide if we will sell it once we obtain permanent residency on Pitcairn Island. The cost of living on Pitcairn Island is much less than in California. I have already applied for a piece of land to build a home on the island at a high elevation with a 270-degree view of the ocean, which will be an excellent radio location.”

So BVRC DXers, it appears that, aside from any future DXpeditions going there, Pitcairn Island should be much more active on the bands in the near future with VP6MW and VP6MC, carrying the torch and continuing the heritage of VP6TC.

The Lighter Side

One day, it occurred to an avid ham operator who was very precise and methodical-minded in his way of doing things, that he had been using the radio too much as of late. He remembered his dear wife and how she had been working hard and doing the daily duties around the house, while he had been setting on his backside enjoying the bands.

Guilt suddenly rushed over him, and he felt really bad about this. Upon his realization, he went straight to his busy wife who was in the kitchen:

Ham: “Hey dear, I just realized I really need to pitch-in around here with you. Is there anything I can do to help you?”

Wife: “Well thank you very much honey, and yes... I sure could use some help. Take this bag of potatoes, peel half of them, and put them in the big pot to cook.”

He did →





This month's featured country: St. Brandon Island

Primary Call Sign Prefix: 3B7

Saint Brandon is a southwest Indian Ocean archipelago of sand banks, shoals and islets belonging to the Republic of Mauritius. It lies about 270 miles northeast of the island of Mauritius. Its name is likely derived from the French town of Saint-Brandan, possibly given by French sailors and corsairs who sailed to and from Brittany.

The island is low-lying and is prone to substantial submersion in severe weather, but also by annual tropical cyclones.

As we would say in Arkansas, "There's not much to it." It has an aggregate land area estimated variously at ½ sq mile and 500 acres. It, and its small islets, supports a population of 40-60 persons, most of them fishermen. St. Brandon and the surrounding islets comprise about 73 sq miles of reefs. It has one of the longest algal ridges in the Indian Ocean.



Location of St. Brandon Island

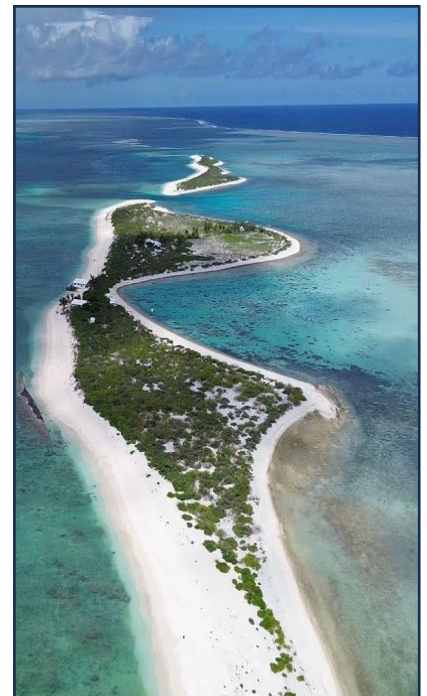
Because the November 1, 1755 Lisbon Earthquake destroyed all Portuguese maps of discovery, there is no way of knowing for certain, but hearsay suggests that St. Brandon was discovered around 975 A.D. by Arabian sailors. It was named Cargados Carajos in 1506 by Portuguese sailors who went ashore for provisioning after having been blown off course from their attempted passage through the Mozambique Channel (the shortest and safest route) on their way to India. Pirates and French corsairs have also used the islands as a refuge.

In 1598, the Dutch occupied the islands.

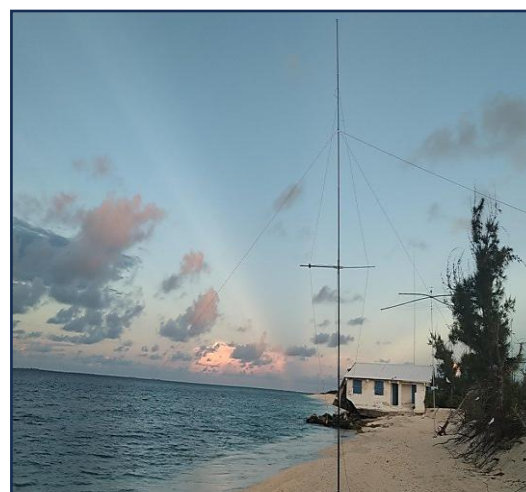
On February 12, 1662, the East India Ship Arnhem ran aground on the St. Brandon Rocks. Volkert Evertsz, the captain, and other survivors of the wreck survived by piloting a small boat to Mauritius, and are thought to have been the last humans to see living dodos. They survived the three months until their rescue by hunting "goats, birds, tortoises and pigs". Evertsz was rescued by the English ship Truroe in May 1662.

The only structure contained on the island is a coast guard and meteorological station (below right) that staffs around 8 persons. Climate on the island is tropical and the temperature does not vary much at all, with the daytime temperature averaging around 81°F year-round.

Because there are no active hams on the island, the only way you're going to work it is if a DXpedition goes there. In the past 15 years, four DXpedition teams have activated the island: 3B7C in 2007, 3B7C (again) in 2012, 3B7A in 2018 which was comprised of 8 French operators, and 3B7M, an 8 operator team from the Slovak Republic, in 2023. The 3B7M DXpedition garnered over 120,000 QSOs. The record for St. Brandon is held by the 3B7C 2012 team which amassed over 137,500 QSOs. If you would like to see an excellent video of the 3B7M operation, click [here](#).



Here are some images of the 2023 3B7M team, which operated from the meteorological station building:



My QSL card from the 2023 DXpedition



The team celebrates over 120,000 QSOs

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