THE SIGNAL

Newsletter of the Bella Vista area Radio Club

Arkansas' Largest Amateur Radio Club

- May meeting – Classic Radio Restoration
- BVRC Field Day Draws Near!
- Radios for Young Rookies
- Feature Story – POTA 101 Day Event
- Announcing Special Event Station K5A
- Rookie Roundup 2026
- Arkansas QSO Party
- BVRC 2026 Technician License Class
- Experimenter's Corner – To Be Announced
- In Memoriam – Sharon Taratula, ARRL
- Sometimes It's the Simple Things
- DXCC Den – Ascension Island

MAY 2026

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, Operating, Special Events)

BVRC Twin Linked Repeaters:

Bella Vista: 147.255 +600 khz offset, pl 162.2

Springdale: 444.100 + 5 MHz offset, pl 162.2

Website: www.bellavistaradioclub.org

BELLA VISTA RADIO CLUB ARKANSAS

The Largest Amateur Radio Club In Arkansas!

Serving members in northwest Arkansas, southwest Missouri, & northeast Oklahoma

WEEKLY BVRC NETS

HAM 101 NET

Mondays @ 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

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

3830 ROUNDTABLE

Sunday Afternoons
4:00 pm during CST
4:30 pm during CDT

3.830 MHz

SOCIAL JUNCTION NET

Sundays @ 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

SLOW SCAN TV NET

"The Slow Scan Show"

Fridays @ 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

NEXT BVRC MONTHLY MEETING

THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2026 @ 7PM
ARKANSAS LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING ACADEMY
3424 S. DOWNUM ROAD
SPRINGDALE, AR

May Meeting Information

HAM 101 Workshop, 6pm preceding monthly meeting – BVRC Social Media Chair and Community Outreach Team leader Alex Smith-KI5EQK will be our instructor for the May HAM 101 Workshop. Alex will be addressing a very interesting topic, "Tactical Awareness Kit for Public Service Communication". His workshop will include defining what ATAK is, why it's a powerful tool for hams to use in event planning, and a demonstration of some of its most useful features to the club. (See announcement later in this issue.)

BVRC May meeting, 7pm – BVRC welcomes member Justin Goggans – K5JCG to our May meeting with his presentation of "Operating the ISM band".

The ISM radio band (Industrial, Scientific, and Medical) refers to portions of the radio spectrum reserved internationally for non-telecommunications purposes, specifically to accommodate devices that generate and use radio frequency (RF) energy for industrial, scientific, medical, or domestic applications like RF heating, microwave ovens, and medical diathermy.

While originally intended for high-power applications, these bands are now widely used for short-range, low-power wireless communication systems because they are typically unlicensed, allowing devices to operate without government permission.

Most of us use the ISM band daily. As you read this, multiple devices in your home are likely operating on the band. Are you fully utilizing the ISM band's capabilities? Imagine regional communications without the need for internet, phone, license, or any power source other than the sun. Justin will delve into LoRa and how it extracts messages from the below the noise floor using ultra-low-powered devices. Join us as Justin shares this unique and informational topic .

SEE YOU THEN!

BOARD MEMBERS

President
Jan Hagan – WB5JAN
wb5jan@arrl.net

Vice President
Kathy Bromley – WQ5T
wq5t@arrl.net

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N5BVA Trustee
Roger Dickey – KJ4QIS
dickeyr@gmail.com

Board Member At Large & Public Information Officer
Tom Northfell – W5XNA
w5xna@arrl.net

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Education & Elmer 911 Committee
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vinsoncarter@gmail.com

Nets Committee
Chair: Dana Widboom – KI5TGY
dcwidboom@gmail.com

Membership Committee
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w5xna@arrl.net

Social Media & Community Outreach Committee
Chair: Alex Smith – KI5EQK
ki5eqk@gmail.com

W5NX Trustee & Club Station Mgr.
Jay Bromley – W5JAY
jayw5jay@outlook.com

Webmaster
Roger Dickey – KJ5QIS
dickeyr@gmail.com

VE Testing Committee
Chair: Don Banta – K5DB
arsk5db@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor
Don Banta – K5DB
arsk5db@gmail.com

As many of you know, I have been sharing with you that the May 2026 edition of the ARRL national magazine, QST, would feature the Bella Vista Radio Club as the featured "club spotlight" for the month.

The ARRL has designated 2026 as the “year of the club”. In doing so, QST magazine is spotlighting an outstanding club in each of the twelve issues of the magazine during the 2026 year. *BVRC was selected as one the clubs to be featured from the 2800 ARRL affiliated amateur radio clubs throughout the United States*.

It is because of you – our members – that BVRC provides the support, the activities, the knowledge, the resources, and the welcoming spirit that made our club worthy of being selected as one of the clubs spotlighted during 2026. Congratulations to all of you for making BVRC the outstanding club it is today.

I am pleased that BVRC has been granted permission to reprint the QST article on the following page of our own nationally recognized newsletter, The Signal. I hope that you will not hesitate to share this article with those who might be interested in learning about our wonderful amateur radio hobby and about how our club can be part of their journey through the hobby.

73,
Jan – WB5JAN

Matt Smith, msmith@arrl.org

Club Spotlight

ICOM Official Sponsor of ARRL Year of the Club

N5BVA

Bella Vista Radio Club

Founded: 1993
Voting Licensed Amateur Members: 313
Members: 325
Section: Arkansas
ARRL Affiliation Date: Jul. 19, 2018
Meetings: Monthly
Website: www.bellavistaradioclub.org
Focus: Mentoring, education

Operating on a moving train is just one of the unique events representative of the types of activities the Bella Vista Radio Club (BVRC) offers its members. The club set up a mobile station, the N5T Train Mobile, on the excursion train that runs through Arkansas, operating SSB and CW on 20 and 40 meters throughout the trip on a Yaesu FT-991A transceiver. Organized and conducted by Joe Dunn, WA5JD, the event offered a rare, fun learning opportunity typical of the club.

The Bella Vista Radio Club began as the Bella Vista Repeater Group in 1993, later changing its name to reflect its expanded interest in all areas of the hobby. Today, the club has more than 300 members. Outreach programs designed to attract new amateurs have created a significant increase in club membership over the past 5 years.

The BVRC Culture

The club touts what it calls the "BVRC culture," whose core values and key commitments include being welcoming, supportive, active, fun, and caring, as well as providing support to their members' growth in all facets of the amateur radio hobby. The club provides licensing classes, a multi-location Volunteer Examiner testing program, a dedicated HAM 101 net, and monthly HAM 101 workshops. Every meeting begins with each member introducing themselves, all part of the club's welcoming nature.

The club's goals are to promote and educate the local community about amateur radio, assist first responders, train and maintain the readiness of local operators, promote diverse activities within the amateur radio community, and maintain an active local amateur radio club and repeater system.

Club President Jan Hagan, WB5JAN, says many members talk about the BVRC as part of their extended family. He describes their year-end banquet as "feeling [like] a big family gathering during the holiday season."

An Active Club

The club meets monthly at the Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy (ALETA), with presentations covering topics relevant to both new and experienced hams, such as the International Amateur Radio Union, contesting from a teenager's point of view, and more.

A highlight of the club's activities, according to Hagan, is the combination camping and portable operations events. These include a POTA campout at Mount Magazine and a stay at Beaver Dam Campground.

The club also has a big ARRL Field Day presence. For the last several years, the city of Bella Vista has declared the week of ARRL Field Day as amateur radio week. Each year, the club creates a short documentary about their activities that is available at **www.youtube.com/@BellaVistaRadioClub**.

One of the Bella Vista Radio Club's biggest recent undertakings has been setting up its own club station. More than 20 members of the BVRC with specialized skills worked to construct the tower, build custom HF beam antennas, run coax and control lines, and set up the station at the ALETA facility. On January 4, 2026, the W5NX station made its first contact. Now the club has a station available to its members for education, contesting, emergency operations, and more.

The Future

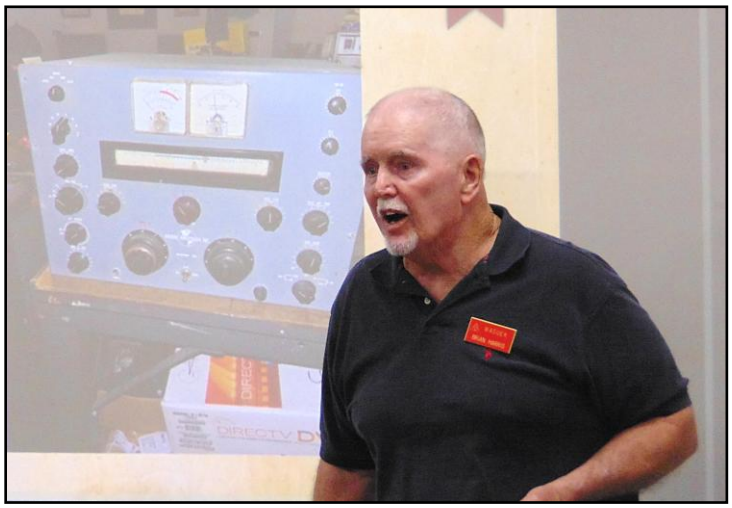
As the club continues to grow, Hagan is excited about its future, saying, "If our club stays true to our mission and culture of providing a welcoming place of support for those new to the hobby, we will develop new, young leaders who will continue to move the club forward no matter where the future technologies take the hobby."

Classic Radio Restoration Makes For Great April Program

It was another packed house for the BVRC April 2026 meeting on Thursday evening, April 2, and the great program by BVRC member Brian Harris-WA5UEK, “New Life for Old Radios”, did not disappoint. It was an extremely informative and interesting presentation to be sure.

First licensed in 1967, Brian has maintained his original call sign since that time. His is a veteran serving two tours in Vietnam. One of Brian’s passions is classic radios of which he has many. He has devoted the majority of his time in amateur radio in collecting, restoring, and using vintage amateur radio equipment. Brian shared photos of his shack, workbench, and the various vintage transmitters and receivers that he has restored and owns. From the pictures Brian displayed, he has a veritable classic radio museum in his home. – All different types of Collins, Heathkit, Johnson, Hammarlund, and other makes of radios were included in his program. If you are interested in those photos of his outstanding radio collection, Brian said you are welcome to send him an e-mail (he is good on QRZ.com) and request a .pdf file of the presentation that he will be glad to send to you.

Brian began his program answering the question, "Why an older radio?" with several answers, especially for newcomers getting started in the hobby and on a budget:



Brian – WA5UEK

PRICE – You can usually find really good bargains on older radios at hamfests, especially if you 'hang around' toward the end of the hamfest when sellers might be willing to reduce the price on their gear, to get it sold and not have to take it back home with them.

FACTORY RETURN NOT REQUIRED – With new radios, if a problem occurs resulting in the need for repair of the unit, most of the time it requires special parts and special tools to affect repair and that usually warrants shipping the unit back to the factory. Then, you are faced with hefty shipping charges both ways to compound with the high bench repair cost. With older radios, you can easily secure a user manual for the radio that contains the schematic and fix it yourself. No need to deal with the factory.

EASE OF REPAIR – Older radios are easy to repair. Normal tools will usually suffice with possibly some test equipment.

PARTS AVAILABILITY – With most of the parts of new radios coming from China, sometimes it is very difficult to obtain repair parts and at other times a long waiting period for parts can occur. With older radios, the parts are usually simple (tubes, capacitors, resistors, etc.) and easy to find on the internet.

THE 'COOL FACTOR' – Older radios that are completely restored are definite conversation pieces, as well as dependable performers.

BVRC President Jan-WB5JAN presents Brian with the BVRC Certificate of Appreciation for his great program

Brian then covered the tools needed for restoration and repair of vintage radios, the proper cleaning techniques, affordable HF transceivers (usually ranging in price from $50-$400), proper steps in the restoration process, a safety checklist of what to do with the radio before powering it up for the first time (Brian calls it "The Big Day"), and concluded his presentation with information on quality vendors that parts can be secured from.

Brian, thanks so very much for an excellent program. This was the first of its kind for BVRC and attending members were totally charmed with it!

Hoping you might be able to do a "Part 2" program sometime? (Hi, hi)

BVRC VE REPORT
From Don Banta – K5DB
BVRC VE Coordinator
April 2026

Congratulations!!

Brent Hedrick – KJ5OIL – New Amateur Extra!

Alan Flynn – KJ5LZN – New Amateur Extra!

Oso Wood – KD5JPK – New General!

Ben Albee – KJ5PPX – New Technician!

Rodney Holt – KJ5PPW – New Technician!

Next month's exam sessions:

- ***May 9, 10 am – Shiloh Museum, 118 W. Johnson Ave, Springdale***
- ***May 9, 2 pm – Bella Vista Public Library, 11 Dickens Place, Bella Vista***

If you wish to test, you must register for an exam session.
To register, and for additional instructions,
go to the TESTING tab on the BVRC website:

https://bellavistaradioclub.org/testing/

BVRC NEEDS YOU!

FOR FIELD DAY 2026 JUNE 27-28!

The biggest ham radio event of the year is just around the corner! Mark your calendar and join us for food, fun, fellowship, operating, & hands-on experience in setting-up portable ham stations. Volunteers are needed for set-up, tear-down, food, drinks, snacks, accessories, etc. If you would like to help, contact

Tom-W5XNA at:
w5xna@arrl.net

DON'T MISS OUT!!!

The Bella Vista Radio Club is proud to announce the "Radios for Young Rookies" program!!!

This initiative celebrates local youth who have successfully passed their amateur radio Technician License exam, awarding them their very own handheld radios to begin their journey in the world's greatest hobby.

This program *will provide a new vhf/uhf amateur radio to young prospective amateurs* under the age of 18 who take and pass their Technician class license through BVRC's VE program and become BVRC members. This program, Radios for Young Rookies, is designed to provide encouragement for young people to get their license and to provide them with the means to begin operating as soon as they are licensed.

"By providing the equipment they need to get on the air immediately, we're not just rewarding their hard work—we're helping them build the skills and confidence to become the next generation of communicators and emergency responders." stated BVRC President, Jan Hagan - WB5JAN.

It is anticipated that the gateway through which most young people will gain their license is through BVRC's weekend Technician license classes taught by BVRC chief instructor, Tom Northfell - W5XNA.

If you know of a child who would like to study to pass their amateur radio Technician license, please contact Tom regarding enrollment requirements for the upcoming class being held in May for two Saturdays, May 23rd and 30th.

w5xna@arrl.net

HAM 101:

Featuring Alex Smith on Tactical Awareness Kit

-Event Planning
-Team Coordination
-Asset Tracking & Management

TAK

BVRC Meeting
May 7th 6pm
@ A.L.E.T.A.
Springdale AR

BEAVER DAM SITE PARK EXPERIENCES BVRC/POTA INVASION

Along with the main station, other POTA stations abounded on the Beaver Dam Site Lake Campground on April 11 as club call W5NX was WELL represented on the ham bands during the BVRC POTA 101 Day event.

Eight different POTA stations were on the air featuring vertical and end-fed half wave antennas, ideal for POTA operation. It was a very successful event with many newcomers getting their first taste of the excitement of activating a park on HF in the POTA program.

A margarita bar was setup Friday evening before the main Saturday event, with a great campfire gathering and great ham fellowship.

BVRC member RVs and tents dotted the campground with some treating event attendees to some homemade recipes, guaranteed to satisfy the most discriminating palate!

Before the main POTA 101 event began the following Saturday at noon, around 10 am Don-K5DB treated Brad-KJ5CWR, Brandon-W5BNL, and Stephen-N5ZE as they traveled northwest about 10 miles from the campground to Devil's Eyebrow State Natural Area where he treated them to a triple operator / triple park activation using the trusty mobile station in his pickup. Devil's Eyebrow overlaps Beaver Lake Wildlife Management Area and Kirk Dupps Beaver Lake WMA, making it a "three-fer". The three operators had a ball as they passed the mic to one another giving calling stations not only three parks, but three call signs per QSO. Needless to say, the pileup was large and all three's digits were busy logging the contacts on their laptops.

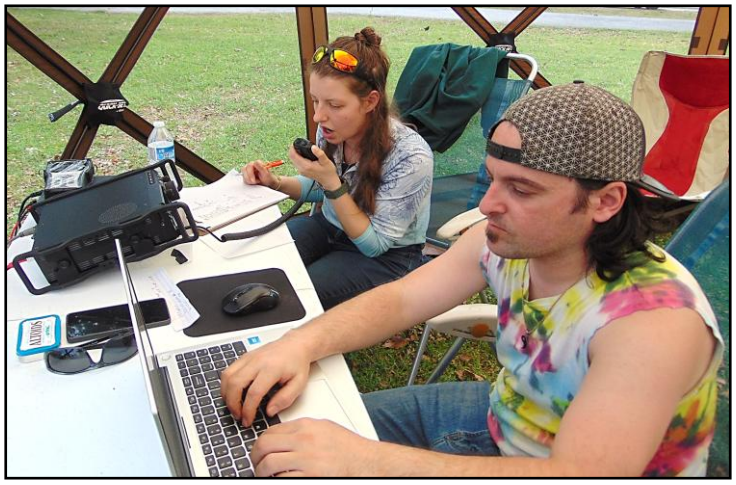
Everyone had a blast, as most BVRC members encounter when they attend special club events such as this one. Enjoy the following pictorial of all the happenings at BVRC POTA 101 Day! :

W5BNL (l), KJ5CWR (r), and N5ZE (foreground) during their triple POTA park activation.

The two Joe's – WA5JD and W5AEN – with the nifty vertical of WB5JAN in the background

The POTA antenna setup of Dale-W5DSL

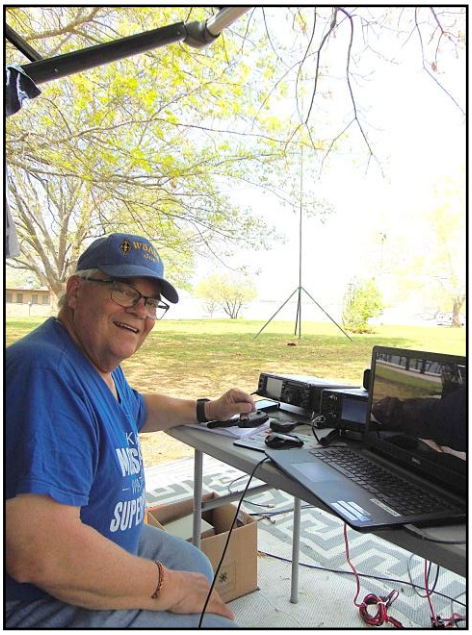
Robert-K5NZV
mans the main digital FT8 station



Lanna-N5ALG at the main SSB station
with Brad-KJ5CWR logging

POTA 101 Day preparations for
the big Saturday evening feast

Joe-WA5JD makes a SSB contact
with Brent-KJ5OIL logging

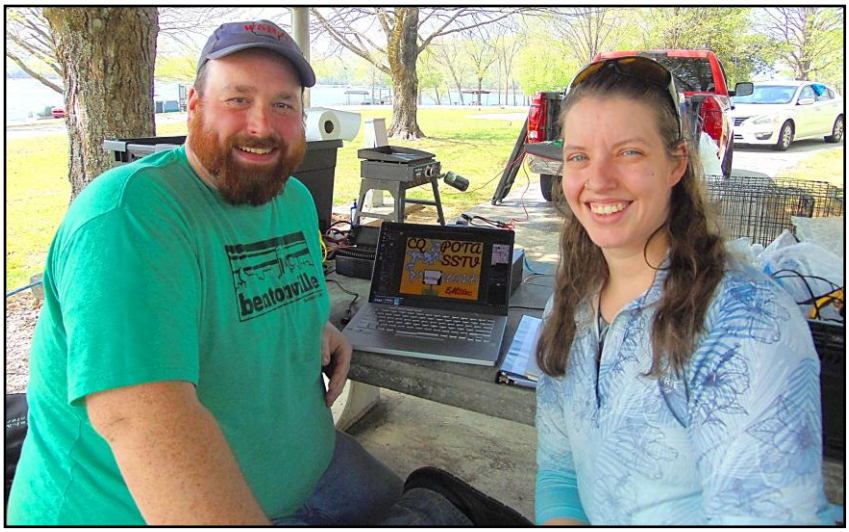


◄ Joe-W5AEN
at the 6-meter station

Brad-KJ5CWR and ►
Don- K5DB, who
saluted the Artemis II
splashdown with
his attire

Kathy-WQ5T and Carla-KI5KTE
at one of the SSB stations

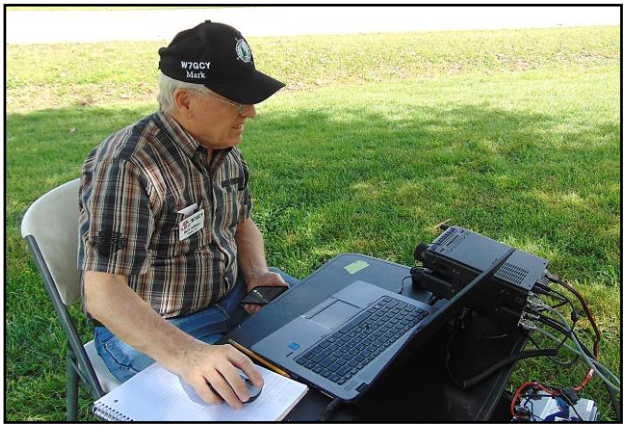
BVRC salutes our country
and our hobby



A BVRC first!
Brandon-W5BNL and XYL Lanna-N5ALG
at the Slow Scan TV station

Dale-W5DSL
makes an FT8 contact in his new tent

Another of the dandy
POTA antennas seen all
over the campground.
This one from Carla-KI5KTE



Mark-W7GCY operates one of the
additional FT8 stations

Announcing BVRC Special Event Station

K5A

Commemorating the 190th Anniversary of Arkansas Statehood

K5A QSL card that will be used for the event as well as given to each BVRC member participant.

Arkansas became a state on June 15, 1836. This year marks the 190th anniversary of Arkansas' joining the Union. To commemorate this milestone, **BVRC club station W5NX will be on the air at the ALETA building with the Special Event callsign *K5A* during the weekend of Saturday, June 13 and Sunday June 14. Operating hours will be in the following segments for both days, with 4 operators the first two segments, and 3 operators for the final segment (11 total operators):**

9am-1pm, 1pm-5pm, 5pm-8pm.

Provided propagation is good, the pileups will be large with Special Event Station enthusiasts attempting to work K5A. *This big event will present an excellent opportunity for any interested club member (and especially newcomers) to enjoy and experience HF operation* (and also a 'warm up' for Field Day).

If you're interested in signing-up to operate this exciting event, send an e-mail to Don-K5DB with the date(s) and segment(s) you'd like to operate:

arsk5db@gmail.com

Sign-up and join us! Only 11 slots available!

ARRL SSB ROOKIE ROUNDUP

Another Great Year of Fun and Merriment at Rookie Roundup 2026!

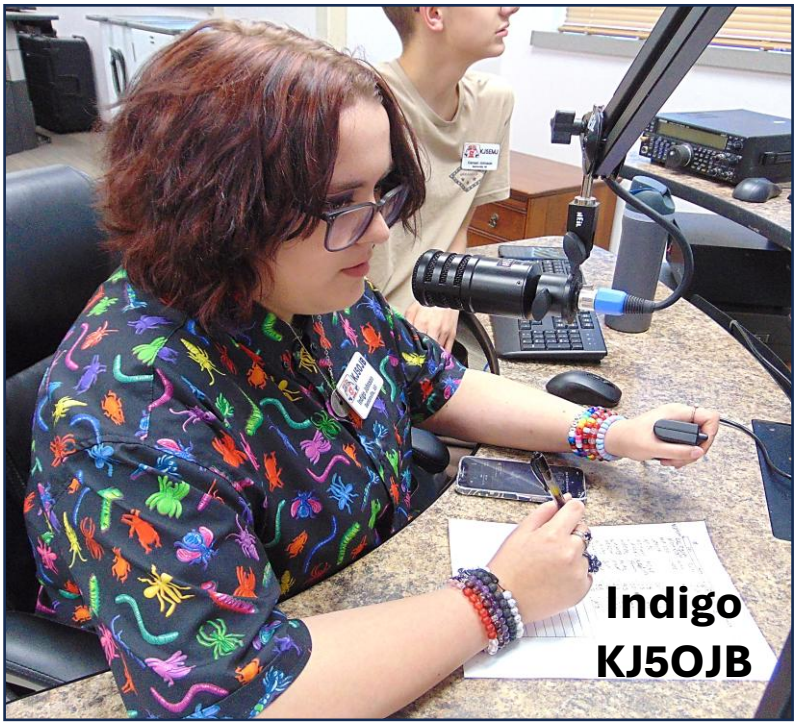
It was an exciting Sunday afternoon at the BVRC club station W5NX, as 11 newcomers from 2026 and three years previous, representing future generations of ham radio operators, demonstrated their operating prowess in the 2026 ARRL Phone Rookie Roundup event.

The afternoon was filled with excitement (as some of these beginners were getting behind the mic for the first time) suspense, and lots of laughs. An outstanding time was enjoyed by all with a desire to do it again next year.

This was a historic moment in BVRC history, as this was the first time Rookie Roundup was conducted from the new W5NX club station. In previous years, the club's wonderful coaches had invited rookies into their home shacks to participate in the event, which was a great success, but being able to congregate and fellowship together at the club station was a definite plus as well.

However, BVRC coaches were still needed and several of them were on hand with the rookies to advise them on how to operate and log. A big thanks to them for their help and assistance: Vinson Carter-WV5C, James Wood-N5ZMX, Stephen Ponder-N5ZE (coach *and* rookie!), and Don Banta-K5DB.

The rookies operated as W5NX in the multi-operator category. As the afternoon progressed, it was great to hear several


Indigo
KJ5OJB


Isabelle
KI5ZXG

BVRC members at their home stations working the rookie team on 20-meter ground wave!

This year's Rookie Roundup consisted of:

Ryan Biazo – K5HEX
Indigo Johnson – KJ5OJB
Canaan Johnson – KJ5EMJ
Jase Rogers – KJ5OJE
George Bradt – N4BRA
Brandon Gage – W5BNL
Jeanne Harlan – W5GIJ
Brad Ponder – KJ5CWR
Isabelle Harrison – KI5ZXG
Jacob Smith – KI5YDZ
and
Stephen Ponder – N5ZE

The group logged 186 QSOs during the 6-hour event, working 27 states and 2 Canadian provinces for a total score of 7,105 points. – An outstanding showing of which we look forward to seeing how they placed nationally when ARRL tabulates the scores in a few months.

We're sad to have to say 'goodbye' to our graduating rookies – KI5YDZ, W5GIJ, KJ5CWR, KI5ZXG, and N5ZE – but we also know they are well on their way to a great amateur radio experience, which includes possibly being a RR Coach someday (which N5ZE already is)!

For our other newcomers reading this article, we will have openings for next year's Rookie Roundup (April 18, 2027), so if you want to spend an exciting Sunday afternoon on HF with other rookie comrades, contact Don-K5DB to sign up now!

Jacob – KI5YDZ makes a QSO with Brandon – W5BNL logging

Jeanne – W5GIJ and George – N4BRA

THE 2026 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 16.

Whether outside of 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 outlets 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 & 2026 ARQP rules:

www.arkqp.com

Announcing the 2026 BVRC Technician License Class!

BVRC Membership Chair, Past President, and Instructor, Tom-W5XNA, has announced the convening of the 2026 BVRC Technician License Class:

CLASS DATES: Saturday, May 23 and Saturday, May 30, 2026

CLASS LOCATION: Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy (ALETA)
3424 S. Downum Road
Springdale, AR 72762

CLASS DURATION: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm, May 23
9:00 am – 4:00 pm, May 30 (test session follows end of class)

FOR FULL INFORMATION ON THE CLASS,
(HOW TO REGISTER, MATERIALS NEEDED, RULES, ETC.)

CONTACT TOM-W5XNA AT

w5xna@arrl.net

WELCOME New BVRC Members!

Shawn Rogers – KJ5MDW – Pea Ridge
Dino Darling – KX6D – Garfield
Scott Sitton – KJ5PCD – Lowell
Donovan Willis - Bentonville
Norris Self – KC5HSS – Elkins
Garrett Myhan – KJ5PBS – Centerton
Ben Albee – KJ5PPX – Springdale
Rodney Holt – KJ5PPW – Edmond, OK

FCC Warns Licensee on Out-of-Band Transmissions

FROM ARRL - The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has responded to a complaint involving a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania amateur for operating outside the privileges of his Technician Class license and causing interference to local emergency service communications by transmitting on a public service frequency, 470.4375 MHz.

According to a letter released by the FCC's Enforcement Bureau, agents investigating an interference complaint from Allegheny County Emergency Services determined that the interfering signal originated from the residence of David Knudtson – KD3ASC, who also holds a General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS) license, WSDQ885. The letter states that Knudtson gave the agents a B-Tech UV-Pro handheld which had been programmed to monitor the county emergency services frequency. Agents determined that its "Audio Relay" feature had been activated, turning the HT "into a simplex repeater that was retransmitting the Allegheny County channel."

The letter continues that Knudtson, who is a relatively new amateur licensee, surrendered the radio to the agents who then "verified that the interference to the Allegheny County system had ceased." The letter also notes that Knudtson's B-Tech radio was certified as a Part 90 (private land mobile radio) device and that he was not licensed to transmit on the emergency services frequency.

Knudtson was warned that unauthorized operation and its associated harmful interference must not resume. He was given 10 days from the date of the March 25 letter to respond with a description of the steps he is taking to avoid a repeat violation.

Amateurs are reminded to exercise care when programming non-amateur frequencies into their VHF/UHF radios, and to ensure that transmitting on those frequencies is disabled.

This Month's Topic:

Making Your Own Printed Circuit Boards

EXPERIMENTER'S CORNER

By Dr. Bill Durham – KG5ZCI

There are lots of ways to build electronic circuits. The quickest is something called "deadbug" where you simply solder all the components into a heap. The name comes from the result, a pile of components with wire sticking out in all directions. It works and its fast. It does suffer from intermittent connections here and there especially if there is some control that turns. It's also a bit difficult to put in a box. Personally, I prefer to make a printed circuit board (PCB). The PCB provides mechanical stability and lends itself to elaboration into a box with knobs, switches and connectors. It is also good for the inevitable trouble shooting and circuit modification, i.e., mod 2, 3 ...

I have been revising my method of making PCB's for many years and I have a procedure which is reasonably fast. The initial layout can also provide the basis for a commercial board if that project warrants. For example, I recently needed several power supply building blocks, (full wave rectifier, filter caps, LED ...). I made one using the procedures described below and followed that with 10 commercially made boards with the help of James Bennett-KA5DVS.

The raw material for PCB's comes in two basic flavors. One is made with a phenolic plastic that has a copper sheet glued to the top and bottom as needed (shown on left side of photo). It is yellow-tan in color. The second FR-4 uses epoxy glass as the substrate with the copper top and optionally the bottom as with the former. It typically is brown-green (upper right in photo). The latter is more expensive, hard on the cutting tools but is the choice of most modern PCB's. I prefer the epoxy version but use the other as well.

The photo at left shows a mixed nut jar containing boards that I secured at the Claremore hamfest for $2. E-bay is my usual source for FR-4.

Making a PCB comes down to two basic steps. Making a mask to cover the copper you want to keep and then removing the copper that you do not need. When I first started I simply used electrical tape cut into thin strips and small circles cut with a piece of brass tubing to mask the board. It works very well for simple boards. Today I rely on free software to draw the mask, then print the mask on special paper which allows me to transfer the image with a household iron.

Software Options: PC Express, Eagle, KiCad are a few. Each has its own quirks. With Eagle you need to start with a schematic and you need very specific information about the components because it will be making a parts list. The software has a list of components and you can choose from the list.

The process of transferring the image is covered on several YouTube videos. I use a yellow transfer paper specifically designed for heat transfer. One package is all you will ever need. Some videos suggest using glossy magazine paper. There are two major problems you may encounter. The first is simple – make sure the image that you transfer is correct side up. Most times a mirror image is required but this is a common option for printers. You can print the circuit pattern on the top of your board or the bottom. These images are different. The second problem is heat. The transfer process does require a very hot iron (cotton setting), and you have to press down with a good uniform medium pressure for several minutes. Make sure your board is clean and shiny before you do the transfer. I use 800 grit sandpaper followed by soap and water.

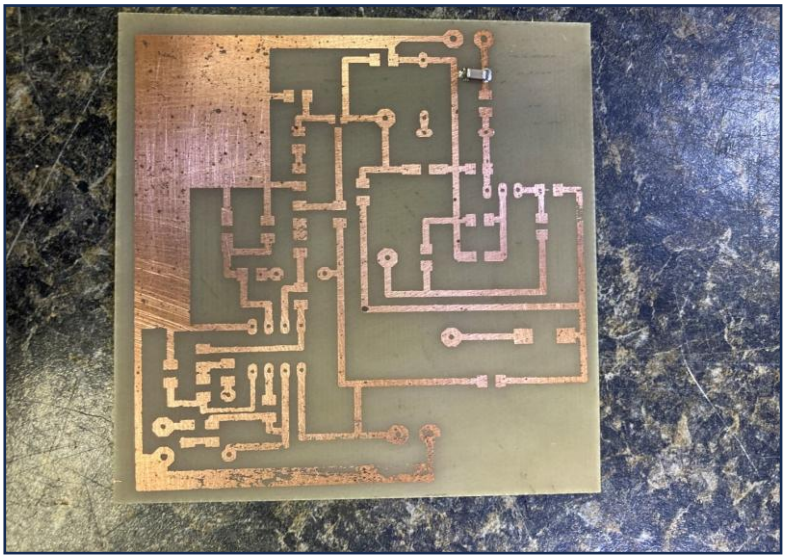
Removal of the copper, or etching has evolved as well. Traditionally, the board was immersed in a bath of warm concentrated ferric chloride. This works very well but the ferric chloride stains every piece of clothing and skin it contacts. I still have a one-pound bottle of the solid in my shop. A cleaner method involves the use of a mixture of muriatic acid and hydrogen peroxide at 50oC. Most boards are etched in 5 to 10 minutes. If the transfer is not perfect you can try to fill in the missed areas with a black marker before etching. Ordinary magic markers do not hold up to the etchant, but the ink used is evolving so try a few. I have had some good luck with modern Sharpie.

Etchant: 200 mL fresh 3% hydrogen peroxide and 100 mL muriatic acid (hydrochloric acid). Warm to 50-60o C. This fills a small dish to about half which is very good. Etching is fast. Discard the solution after etching. I pour mine onto our gravel walk-way. The gravel neutralizes the acid and the small amount of copper is not a significant hazard. Do not store it in a bottle. The solution is unstable will generate gases which will cause the bottle to explode when the pressure is high enough.

Once the board is etched, the holes for components and mounting can be drilled. I use carbide drill bits (several hundred bought at a hamfest for $8) and a Dremel mini-drill press. The drill bits are very small and very brittle, but the Dremel tool does the job very well. Pick the size of the drill bit based on the size of wire you intend to place in the hole. Something on the order of #70 for small resistors and capacitors is a good place to start.

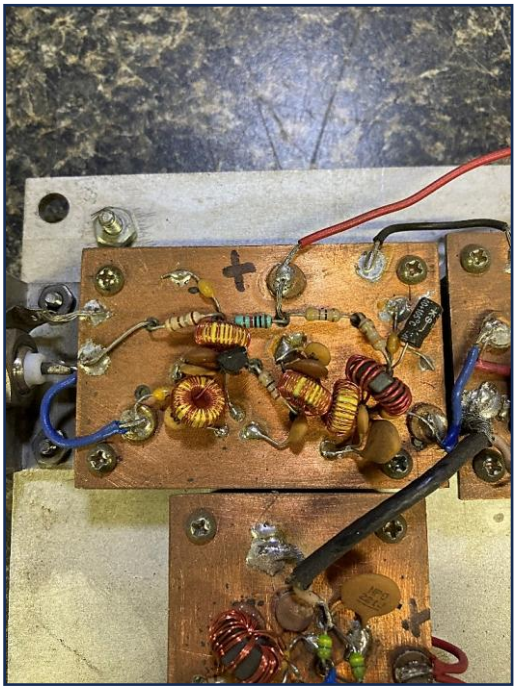
Ordinary drill bits can be used with the phenolic boards, but the glass imbedded in the epoxy boards dulls a tool steel bit rapidly. Cutting the boards suffers from similar issues. I use a small shear from Grizzly Tools for the cutting to size. A hack saw will work for both, but don't expect a long life. (Note: Trim the board to final size after etching. The transfer paper sometimes fails near the board edge.)

Traditional PCB's have the trace on the bottom with the components on the top. Modern boards will have traces on the top and bottom with holes plated through for good soldering. Plating through the holes is not something a home experimenters can do. If you use surface mount components very few holes need to be drilled since the parts and the traces will be on the top. Practice board containing a mixture of surface mount and through hole is shown in the below left photo. The large circles are for wires going to power and panel mounted components. If I wanted to keep the board I would have used a marker to fill in the voids before etching.



For small RF circuits there is another option that I like to use. If you start with singled sided board you can drill holes for the components. Some of the parts will need to connect to others but some will have one lead grounded. These are simply solder to the top side, no hole required.

For the others use a large drill bit to remove only some of the copper around the hole (1/8") but not the substrate. Pass the leads through the holes and solder the components together as needed. Two or three leads can go in the holes and jumpers run on the underneath. (See photo at right)



From ARRL . . .

New FCC FRN Contact Information Requirement

The FCC now requires every FCC Registration Number (FRN) holder to update their contact information in the Commission Registration System (CORES) (e-mail and postal addresses) within 10 days of a change.

Because every FCC licensee – including amateur radio operators – must have an FRN to file applications, this requirement applies to all licensed amateurs. FRN contact information is handled separately from contact information related to a license in the License Manager System. Both records must be kept up to date, and each requires a separate update.

Prior to this change, no specific deadline existed for updating FRN or license contact information. Instead, the amateur rules at sections 97.21 and 97.23 have provided that a license may be suspended or revoked if FCC correspondence is returned as undeliverable because of an incorrect address/e-mail. These provisions remain in effect as well as the 10-day deadline applicable to FRN information.

No immediate action is required if your FRN information is current, but you must adhere to the 10-day rule for future changes. It is recommended to periodically check both the CORES and License Manager Systems to endure that contact information is accurate, even no changes have occurred.

The new deadline, detailed in section 1.8002 (b)(2) of the FCC's rules, became effective February 5, 2026 as part of a proceeding that was limited to constraining robocalls. Although the proceeding focused on robocall issues, the 10-day update requirement applies broadly to all FRN holders. On February 6, the FCC confirmed in a Public Notice (www.fcc.gov/document/wcb-reminds-rmd-filers-new-base-forfeitures) that the new deadline applies to all FRN holders. The amendment replaces language adopted in 2001 that required FRN holders to keep their contact information up to date but had not imposed a deadline for doing so.

Numerous requests for clarification from those with non-robocaller interests led the FCC to issue the Public Notice.

It explained that fines imposed on those subject to the robocall rules for not keeping contact information current do not apply to licensees such as radio amateurs, but that the 10-day deadline does apply to all FRN holders.

See the following resources for updating FRN and license information:

- FCC tutorial on updating FRN information: https//apps.fcc.gov/cores/html/Update_FRN_Information.htm

- ARRL information on how to update license information: www.arrl.org/call-sign-renewals-or-changes

For assistance, call the FCC FRN Help Desk at: 877 – 480 – 3201 (available 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM ET).

ARRL Mourns the Loss of Awards Manager Sharon Taratula (1962-2026)

(Editor's note: Many BVRC members' lives have been touched by Sharon in times past. Sharon was always cordial, prompt, and expedient. She treated you like a person and not a number in a computer. Personally, she has helped me numerous times with small glitches in my DXCC record, and had it corrected almost immediately. She will be sorely missed by many DXers and ARRL awards pursuers in our club. – RIP Sharon.)

ARRL is saddened to share the news that Sharon Taratula, who served ARRL with dedication and distinction for 32 years, passed away on February 4, 2026.

Sharon joined ARRL on January 31, 1994, as DX Century Club (DXCC) Awards Technician. She later served as Administrative Assistant (1996), MVP Administrative Manager (2011), and from 2016 until her passing, as Awards Manager. For more than 3 decades, she became a cornerstone of support for some of the most recognized programs in amateur radio.

"Sharon was monumental in the ARRL Awards and QSL Bureau in managing day-to-day work processes," said Radiosport & Regulatory Manager Bart Jahnke, W9JJ. "She was the go-to person for Logbook of the World®, Online DXCC, and the legacy DXCC system. She had a graceful demeanor in helping all members and others with their DXCC Award needs," he added. Jahnke also noted her extraordinary attention to detail, adding that she often backed up her e-mail reminders with Post-it® notes to ensure that nothing was overlooked.

Former ARRL Field Services and Radiosport Manager Dave Patton-KW9A, recalled that a previous manager affectionately called Sharon "Radar", after the *M*A*S*H* television show character, because "she always seemed to know what he needed or was about to ask her." Patton added, "My most-embedded impression of Sharon was of her calm, even demeanor in the face of almost anything. She just rolled with whatever dilemma needed her attention and took care of it." He also remembered that Sharon handled urgent and sensitive member requests – including expediting a DXCC plaque to a terminally ill ARRL member – with compassion and care.

Sharon deeply valued the relationships she built with DXers over the years and enjoyed their visits to ARRL Headquarters, their messages, and their shared passion for amateur radio. Her outlook reflected her resilience and practicality. As one colleague remembered her saying, "Eh, it is what it is – and we'll now fix it and make it better!"

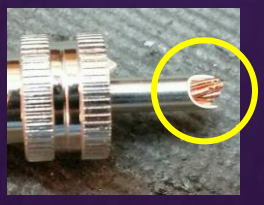
Throughout her 32 years of service, Sharon supported countless members with grace, patience, and a genuine desire to help. She cared deeply about her coworkers and the amateur radio community she served. Her steady presence and kind heart will be greatly missed.

Sometimes It's the Simple Things

By Steve Phillips – NS4P

We've all had frustrating experiences trying to chase down some gremlin in our gear whether it be ham radio or other types of equipment, but three recent experiences reminded me of the old medical adage – "If you hear hoofbeats, don't expect Zebras". The intent of this trope is to remind us that while exotic issues do pop up occasionally, more often it's the obvious.

Mystery #1 – SWR issues: I have an Ed Fong J-Pole antenna that has operated reliably for several years. Recently I needed to disconnect the feed line so I could close my hurricane shutters. When I reconnected the coax, I noticed that the SWR was much higher than the normal 1.1:1. I immediately started on a search for cuts in the feedline, damage to the antenna, corrosion at the joints, and all the other normal stuff – all to no avail. Then I disconnected the feedline one last time and happened to glance down at the PL-259 connector and noticed that *the center conductor pin had never been soldered!*



This is a jumper I made myself, several years ago, which had served me well without ever causing a problem.....until it did. A quick repair with the soldering iron, and everything returned to normal.

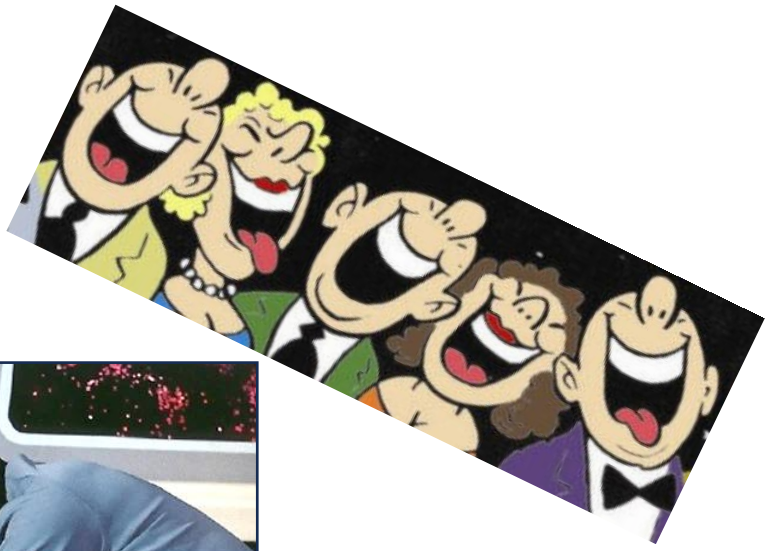
Mystery #2 – A computer that won't start: I was asked to look at a relatively new computer that had been working great and then suddenly stopped. Note that this is a computer that I personally unboxed and set up, so clearly it had been installed perfectly (pride goeth before the fall!). Everything appeared in order, but it simply would not boot up. Other devices on the same branch circuit were working, and there was no evidence of magic smoke leakage. After a few minutes of puzzling, I noticed that something did not look quite right with the power cord. It turned out that the plug was in the socket but not fully bottomed out.

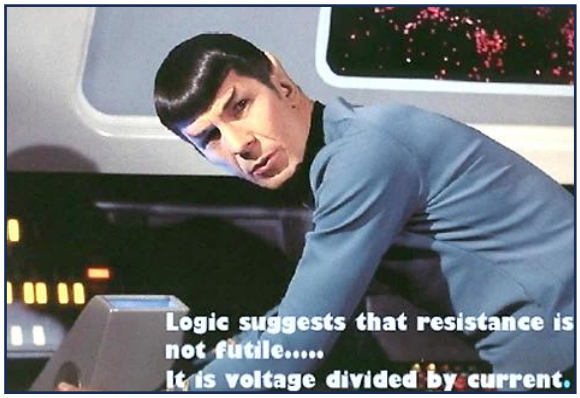
A bit of a push, and all was well. **Egg on my face!**

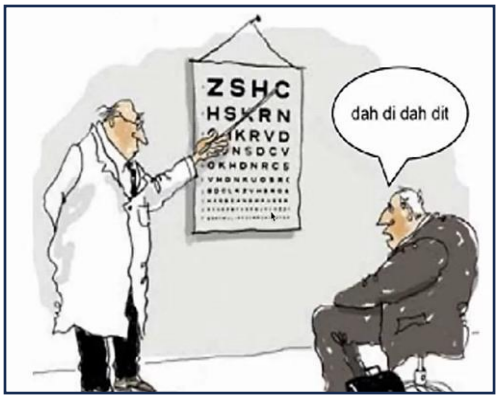
Mystery #3 – A radio that powers up but will not transmit: A known working radio, purchased new by the user, suddenly stopped transmitting. A thorough review of the manual and checking the most likely settings did not indicate anything abnormal. Again, there was no evidence of destroyed components or other damage. When preparing the device to return to the manufacturer for repair, it was suggested that we contact the Technical Support department of the U.S. based manufacturer. An actual human technician answered, and after going through the basics, he suggested that we confirm that the device was not in "Demo Mode". Remember where I said we checked the "most likely" settings – Demo Mode was not on that list. Yup – somehow Demo Mode was enabled, which made all the lights and meters work, but inhibited transmit. A quick change in the menu to return to normal operation and no expensive shipping was required!

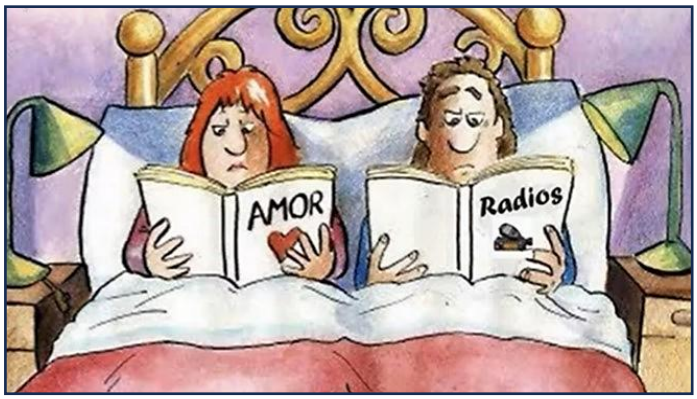
So, keep an open mind when chasing problems – even if you are sure that that jumper is good, the device is plugged in, or you are positive the configuration is correct.....it might not be – so check the simple stuff before calling-in for that RMA number.

LAUGHTER









Ascension Island is an isolated volcanic island, just south of the Equator in the South Atlantic Ocean. It is about 960 miles from the west coast of Africa. It is literally "in the middle of nowhere" between South America and Africa in the Atlantic Ocean.

I've always thought of it as being one of the "British Commonwealth Triplet Islands of the south Atlantic Ocean", along with St. Helena Island and Tristan de Cunha Island. The amateur radio callsign prefixes of the three reflect this with St. Helena being ZD7, Ascension, ZD8, and Tristan de Cunha, ZD9. Technically, it is governed as part of the British Overseas Territory of Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, of which the main island – Saint Helena (where Napoleon was exiled the second time) – is around 800 miles to the southeast. The territory also includes sparsely populated Tristan da Cunha Island 2,000 miles to the south of Ascension, about halfway to the Antarctic Circle.

Ascension Island was possibly discovered by the Portuguese seafarer João da Nova in 1501, before being named Ascension by Afonso de Albuquerque in 1503 on Ascension Day. Ascension Island was garrisoned by the British Admiralty from October 1815 to 1922 and was an important refueling stop for ships and commercial airliners in the days of international air travel by flying boats. During World War II, it was an important naval and air station, especially providing antisubmarine warfare bases in the Battle of the Atlantic.

Location of Ascension Island (red balloon)

The island is the location of RAF Ascension Island, which is a Royal Air Force station, a European Space Agency rocket tracking station, a British-American signals intelligence facility, and the BBC World Service Atlantic Relay Station. The island was used extensively as a staging point by the British military during the Falklands War. Ascension Island hosts one of four ground antenna locations that assist in the operation of the Global Positioning System (GPS) navigational system (the others are on Kwajalein Atoll, Diego Garcia, and Cape Canaveral).

One type of bird species commonly found on Ascension Island – the Sooty Tern

During the heydays of the U.S.-U.S.S.R space race, NASA tracked the Apollo moon landings from Ascension. Today, NASA operates a Meter Class Autonomous Telescope (MCAT) on Ascension for tracking orbital debris, which is potentially hazardous to operating spacecraft and astronauts, at a facility called the John Africano NASA/AFRL Orbital Debris Observatory.

Power lines and antenna arrays

Officially, there are no “natives” that live on Ascension Island because nobody is *from* there. The UK government denies the right of abode, turning Ascension's 800 or so British citizens - some of whom have lived on the island for decades - into temporary visitors. To enter, you must get the written permission of the King's representative, known rather chillingly as the Administrator.

The airport - whose runway was once the longest in the world and, back in the day, designed to accommodate the Space Shuttle as an emergency runway, is operated by the US Air Force which grants limited access to Britain.

Climate wise, Ascension Island has a hot desert climate. The temperatures at the coast average from 72.9 to 82.0 °F, and about 9.0 to 10.8 °F cooler at the highest point. Rain showers may occur at any time during the year, but tend to be heavier between June and September. Although the island is in the tropical zone, average annual rainfall is very low.

So, what's the story on Ascension when it comes to amateur radio? Currently it ranks at #102 on Club Log's Most Wanted DX list.

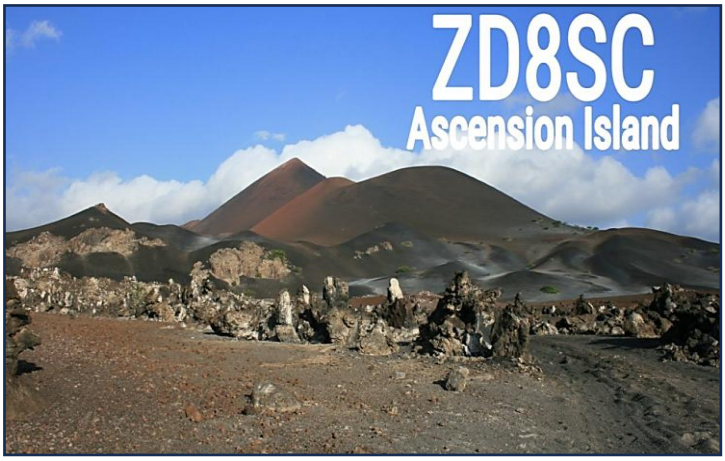
There is an amateur radio club on the island – The Ascension Amateur Radio Club, club call ZD8TC – comprised of a handful of amateurs (below right), but from what I've found from research, they primarily concentrate on 6-meter operation. When they do operate on the lower HF bands (40m-10m), they typically set up on Green Mountain to leverage the equatorial location for optimal propagation to South America and Africa, often using SSB and CW. Overall, operation from the island residents is infrequent and scarce, making it a sought-after DX entity often used for DXpeditions and special event operations.

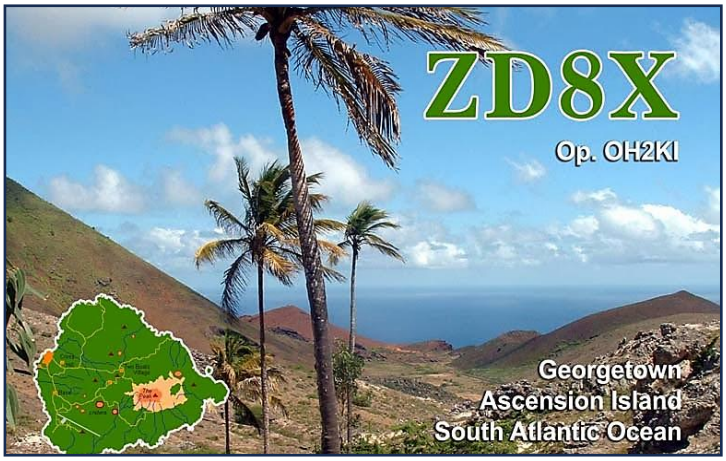
View from Green Mountain, highest point on Ascension Island

Georgetown – capital of Ascension Island

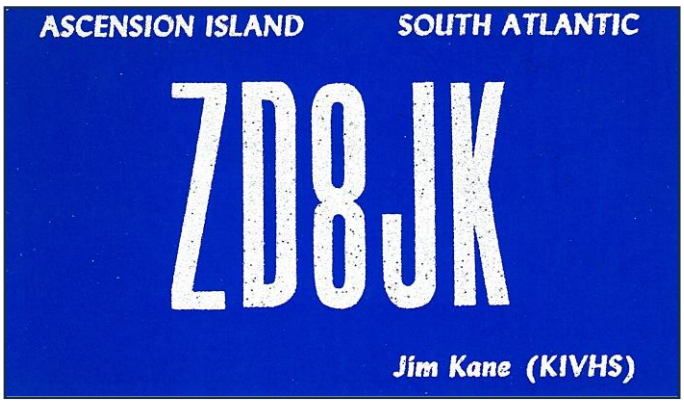
Government House in Georgetown

Historically, for the past 55 years since 1971, there have been very few ZD8 activations: ZD8JK-1971, ZD8TC-1979, ZD8AD-2006, ZD8UW-2009, ZD8X-2013, and ZD8UW-again in 2013 (both ZD8UW DXpeditions were performed by the Cambridge University Wireless Society), ZD8N-2015, and most recently ZD8GB, operated by Gerald-G3WIP who operated for 2.5 days in May, 2025.





QSLs from past Ascension DXpeditions



My first Ascension QSL from 1971
when Jim-K1VHS operated solo as ZD8JK

So, as you can see, amateur radio activations from Ascension are fairly rare. If you do not have it on your confirmed list, hang in there. Even though there are no scheduled future amateur radio DXpeditions to Ascension Island currently announced in the DX outlets, one could be arranged at any time. Keep monitoring the outlets, because Ascension will be one of the "crown jewel" entities to add to your confirmed countries list. It's pretty rare and worth waiting for.

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