

THE KEY

Official Journal of The Riverland Amateur Radio Club WR9ARC



The Riverland Amateur Radio Club is a Special Service Club affiliated with the American Radio Relay League. The club is active in community service as well as actively promoting Amateur Radio in the Coulee Region. The Club is open to all who are interested in Amateur Radio and will help unlicensed persons become licenses thru the FCC.

AS THE SPARKS FLY

Sounds like a soup opera, doesn't it?

Well that is what the last 9 months have felt like too. Every time it looked like a solution was going to be found and the last chapter would be over, I was left hanging because the sparks came back with a possible other cause.

The story begins in mid-January of this year, about the time the Badger Line coming up HWY 53 in North La-Crosse County was energized. RF interference across all the HF bands bringing my radio activities to a halt. I have been working with all 4 parties involved, American Transmission Company (ATC), Exel Energy, Riverland Energy and Power Engineers.

I am realizing that this problem is not something that is taken lightly by all parties. Riverland Energy has been to my place 3 time looking for the issue, even replaced a transformer and many insulators because of excessive noise coming from them, but that did not solve my issue. Power Engineers out of Meridian, Idaho flew 2 engineers and there equipment to spend a full day here to track down the problem. As luck would have it the day started out wet with a slight mist in the air and the RF noise was gone. They still were here for 6 hours doing a lot of testing but came up with nothing. The noise was gone for 3 days and then came back.



**Riverland
Amateur Radio
Club
P.O. Box 621
Onalaska, WI.
54636**

**Repeater
146.970 PL 131.8**

**RARC Net
8:00 PM Sunday on
the 146.970
Repeater**

Club Meetings:

**Trustee Meeting
3rd Tuesday of the
month at Perkins
Restaurant, 9428
State Road 16,
Onalaska, WI
54650 at 5:30 PM,
all club members
are welcome.**

**Program evening is
1st Tuesday of the
month at 7:00 PM,
Gunderson Clinic
conference room 1
in the lower level.**

Riverland Amateur Radio Club
PO Box 621
Onalaska, WI 54650

The Key is published monthly and e-mailed to members and friends of the Riverland Amateur Radio Club by the 28th of each month.

The newsletter focuses on news, announcements and activities of the Riverland Amateur Radio Club. It may also consists of news and information of interest to the Amateur Radio community as a whole. Guest editorials and articles related to Amateur Radio are welcome.

Address any correspondence or anything that should be included in the newsletter to: Greg Miller at KA9FOZ@gmail.com.

The Riverland Amateur Radio Club maintains a website at rarc.qth.com. More information about the club can be found there as well as past copies of The Key.

RARC also maintains a Facebook page where members add information and share there Amateur Radio adventures. Please friend us at Riverland Amateur Radio Club—RARC.

RARC maintains a repeater that is located on the WXOW television tower above LaCresent, MN. 146.970 pl 131.8.

Below are listed your RARC 2019 Board of Trustees and contact information.

- President.....Dan Abts, AB9TS Email...ab9ts@yahoo.com
- Vice-President.....David Peters, KB9EWG Email...kb9ewg@gmail.com
- Secretary.....Rick Kolter, KD9GVS Email...rckolter@gmail.com
- Treasurer.....Drew Neve, AB9NE Email...ab9ne@yahoo.com
- Trustee.....Carl Thurston, KC9HDS Email...kc9hds@gmail.com
- Trustee.....Bill Wood, KE9XQ Email...ke9xq@charter.net
- Repeater Trustee...Shawn Hicks, KD9KGQ Email...eistim68@gmail.com
- Newsletter Editor.....Greg Miller, K9LEC Email...ka9foz@gmail.com

RARC CLUB PATCH ORDER FORM

Please send me _____ club patches to the address below. I have enclosed \$3.50 for each patch ordered.

Send patches to:

Name _____ Call _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Send form and check to: RARC Box 621 Onalaska, WI. 54650



WR9ARC Participates in Wisconsin Parks On The Air

by Dan Abts AB9TS

For a number of years the RARC has participated in the National Wildlife Refuge special event in mid-October. Since that is no longer an organized event I was looking for another fall operating event. Bob W9LSE suggested Wisconsin Parks on the air. See WIPOTA.COM for details. The event runs from 11am to 6pm on Saturday the 21st. Several other hams I talked with like to camp so we decide to activate Perrot State Park in Trempealeau. Kevin KC9ZGD agreed to chair the event and made the reservations for September 20 and 21. They don't allow RVs and campers in their group sites so the best we could do is a dual site 6A and 6B. This sounded like it would work except if others wanted to camp they would have to get their own site with some trees and brush in between ours and theirs. The other negative is that a daily or yearly pass is needed to use the state park.



Kevin made the reservations so he picked 6B since it would work better for his big RV. When I pulled in and looked at 6A I noticed a big hickory tree was dropping nuts when the wind blew. I set up my pop-up camper further back by other trees. I threw a tire weight over a branch about 50 feet up in one of the trees using a fishing rod. I used that to pull up a light rope attached to a wire I used for an end fed half wave antenna. The fishing line broke when Kevin was a few inches away from grabbing the rope,

twice. Finally we were able to grab the rope by standing on a picnic table and using a tent pole with a wiener roasting stick taped to it. I hooked up the box with the 9 to 1 balun, coax and counter poise wire and we were ready for supper. Just then a man rode up on a bicycle and said we were getting into his TV. I hadn't even transmitted anything yet! It was Jim W9UUM. He was camping at the site just east of us. After talking with him for a while, we headed to Drogan's near Holmen where we had a nice Friday fish dinner. After dinner we headed up to Greg K9LEC's place to get the club trailer then back to the campground. We parked the trailer near the road under a black walnut tree where other hams could find us easily and others who went by would see the logo and writing and perhaps stop in and see what we were doing. Drew AB9NE had arrived and set up his pup tent in the one grassy spot. We had a campfire then went to bed.

Saturday morning Drew put up another wire antenna and tested his radio. The club trailer had a screw driver antenna mounted on it so we used that with a radio for 20 meters. Drew's antenna worked well on 40 meters after adding more wire to it. David KB9EWG used a radio on a picnic table connected to the 40' endfed. 15 meters was dead so I added more wire to the counterpoise so it would tune better on 75 meters. I had three computers for logging but I couldn't get them to work right since the logging spreadsheet I downloaded had protected cells. I found out days later it would fill in the date and time if you entered a complete contact and pressed enter



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David made some contacts on 75 but still had some tuning problems. I added more wire to the counterpoise and connected the end to the ladder on Kevin's RV which made the radio happy. All three stations were now making contacts. More hams began to arrive. We ended up with 9 in all, including Jim. A ham that lives in Eau Claire stopped in and talked with us. A group of 9 girls and 3 leaders who were in the Boy Scouts stopped in after their hike up Brady's Bluff. Kevin let each one of the girls make a call on 20 meters. No one answered but the girls seemed to enjoy having their voice go out over the radio to the whole country. While this was going on, John N9ARL was standing near the trailer talking with the leaders and some of the rest of us when a black walnut fell from the tree and hit him squarely on the top of the head. He wasn't seriously hurt but from the looks of it, it sure didn't feel good. He had to pick pieces of the husk out of his hair. All in all it was a good day. We had close to 30 contacts, roasted wieners over the campfire and lots of good conversation. We listened to the Ride the Ridges traffic on the 146.97 and Winona repeaters. Late in the afternoon we hiked to the park sign and took a group picture. We get 25 extra points if we take a picture with the park sign and wear Packer apparel. Rick KD9GVS wore a Vikings jersey. I hope they don't subtract points for that! The rain held off until the evening after we had our campfire. That is when I saw the frogs. I had heard about them from my sister years ago. These small tan frogs appear in the restroom at night. They are only about an inch long but they climb the walls and windows and look really cute. Not a one can be found there during the day.

Sunday we took the club trailer back to Greg's, took down the antennas and packed up. It was my wife's birthday so we were meeting at Sullivan's restaurant in Trempealeau at 6pm for dinner. Even though there was rain on the radar I still hiked the prairie loop trail, visited the nature center, checked out the canoe/kayak area before leaving my campsite. I parked in the lot by the Brady's bluff trail and hiked to the top and back. There is a wonderful view up there. I found some of the good thick skinned hickory nuts along the trail. The ones at the campsite were the bitter thin skinned ones. I still had time and no rain so I hiked the Perrot Ridge trail loop. If you ever hike either of these trails, go up the east trail. If you go up the west side you have a lot of steps to climb up rather than down. Dinner was great with all my kids, their spouses and the two grandchildren. I love their batter fried jumbo shrimp and Irish potatoes. The ride home was in the rain but I left all the unpacking for Monday.



DXpedition to use FT8 robot?

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

It's inevitable. At some point, machines are going to render humans irrelevant. It's been a recurring theme in science fiction since before I was born (1955), and there are numerous predictions of the Singularity, the point in time when machines will be smarter than human, occurring between 2030 and 2045.

It may happen in amateur radio sooner than we think. A couple of days ago, one of my readers, sent me a link to a blog post by John, AE5X: [Automated FT8 "FoxBot" in upcoming DXpedition – confirmed](#). He wrote:

"A [DXpedition to Tokelau](#) will take place from 1 to 11 October and it will be your chance to work an FT8 robot operating in Fox/Hound mode.

"Stathis SV5DKL has been working on a "FoxBot" for some time now, is listed as a partner to this DXpedition and has confirmed that the DXpedition will be using his FoxBot."

John has since updated this post, noting "The SV5DKL logo has now been removed and the DX team will be in 'full compliance' with the mode." Full compliance meaning following the rules set up by the ARRL DXCC rules.

The ARRL is, of course, against the use of robots. A recent *ARRL Letter* noted:

"ARRL has incorporated changes to the rules for all ARRL-sponsored contests and DXCC, prohibiting automated contacts and requiring that an actual operator is initiating and carrying out a contact. These changes also apply to Worked All States (including Triple Play and 5-Band WAS), Fred Fish W5FF Memorial, and VUCC awards. The changes are effective immediately and affect the rules for both HF contests, and VHF/UHF contests as well as DXCC.

"A resolution at the July ARRL Board of Directors meeting pointed to 'growing concern over fully automated contacts being made and claimed' for contest and for DXCC credit. The rules now require that each claimed contact include contemporaneous direct initiation by the operator on both sides of the contact. Initiation of a contact may either be local or remote."

As AE5X says, however, the use of FT8 robots in the future is a certainty. Sooner or later, some DXpedition is going to use an FT8 robot without saying anything about it. How is the ARRL going to know that a DXpedition is using robots if the DXpedition operators don't tell them?

I'm wondering when some DXpedition is going to give up on SSB and CW altogether. Why bother with those modes when you can make hundreds or thousands more contacts by just operating FT8?

Another thought just occurred to me. If the ARRL gets its way and Techs are awarded HF digital privileges, how long will it take for some enterprising Tech to make the DXCC Honor Roll using FT8 exclusively. Oh, the horror of it all!

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Dan Romanchik, KB6NU, is the author of the KB6NU amateur radio blog (KB6NU.Com), the "No Nonsense" amateur radio license study guides (KB6NU.Com/study-guides/), and often appears on the ICQPodcast (icqpodcast.com). When he's not wondering when robots are going to take over the world, he likes to (manually) operate CW on the HF bands.

I continued to do some testing of my own and reporting back to them what my results were. At one point I put a radio in my truck and drove around the area mapping where the signal was and where it would disappear. I found it to be in an egg shape with 1 high voltage tower within the egg at the center of the larger diameter of the egg. This was relayed to them.

Further testing reveals the noise is gone when it has rained for a while and all is wet. As the day dries out the noise starts coming back a little at a time until it takes over HF.

Recently Roger Reader, KA9BKK, came over with a MFJ-852 Line Noise Meter. He walked around the area taking readings. What you see in the picture is the reading he got around one of the high power poles. We walked to a pole on either side of this one and there was no noise level indicated. As we see it this would point to an issue with this particular pole. It is the same pole that is located within my egg drawing.



At last discussion with ATC I am told another delegation of engineers will be here at a later date once things get coordinated between each party. Hopefully it will be a sunny day and the RF noise is at its maximum.



At left is the tower Roger located, so stay tuned, when this is solved I will let you know the results.

Greg Miller, K9LEC



ACTIVITIES FOR October 2019

September 29...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Kevin, KC9ZGD.

October 1...Program Night at Gundersen Lutheran. APRS and tactical radio for public events presented by Bob Seaquist, W9LSE.

October 6...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Mark, KB9OFK.

October 13...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Greg, K9LEC.

October 20...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Carl, KC9HDS.

October 27...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Rick, KKD9GVS.

November 3...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Kevin, KC9ZGD.

November 9...License Exams. Register 5 days in advance to Roger Reader, KA9BKK, 1-608-783-0723 or at readers@centurytel.net.