



The Newsletter of the EAST GREENBUSH AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

November 2024

www.egara.org

President Emeritus - Tom Scorsone, KC2FCP President - Bryan Jackson, W2RBJ Vice-President - Walt Snyder, N2WJR
Secretary - David Jaegar, Jr. - K2DEJ Treasurer, Pete Brickman, KD2YLG
Board Members: Tom Scorsone, KC2FCP Patrick Negus, KD2YLG Steve VanSickle, WB2HPR

Spectrum Pulls Plug on VHF Repeater

The club's main VHF repeater on 147.270 MHz went dark on October 30th after Spectrum shut down the site located in Loudonville adjacent to the Albany Reservoir. Earlier this year the company sold the tower and indicated the support structure where the repeater was installed would be removed. While the new owner of the tower had agreed to allow the club to use the structure, the agreement did not include the building where the repeater was housed.

"We'd been expecting Spectrum to shut down the site, but were not given a firm date in advance," said EGARA President Bryan Jackson, W2RBJ. "So, while the move was expected at some point, it unfortunately still caught us by surprise." Following the shut down, club members were informed by email that traffic had been moved to the UHF repeater which operates at 444.700, PL 94.8 and to the VHF backup on 145.110, PL 94.8.

The club's leadership had been seeking a new location for the main VHF repeater for several months and immediately stepped up the effort after it was shut down. Three possibilities are being explored. The first is at the former Troop G State Police barracks in Loudonville which is now part of Siena College. The site offers a tower that was previously used by the law enforcement agency for its communications. A second possibility would be at the former analog site of WTEN in the Helderberg Mountains and that is being reviewed by the station's management. A third location under consideration would be at the North Greenbush Town Garage where an unused tower currently stands. The club has not actively explored that location pending decisions on the first two.

Coverage plots provided by the Siena and WTEN locations can be found on pages 2 and 3.

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Jackson Not Expected to Seek Another Term

EGARA President Bryan Jackson, W2RBJ, announced at the club's October meeting that he does not plan to run again next April when club elections are held.

"It's been a great honor to serve the club, but I believe it's time to bring in new leadership after holding the club's top post for many years," he said. "I fully expect to remain actively involved and look forward to assisting and guiding whoever takes on the role of President."

Jackson said he may seek a board position to help support the transition.

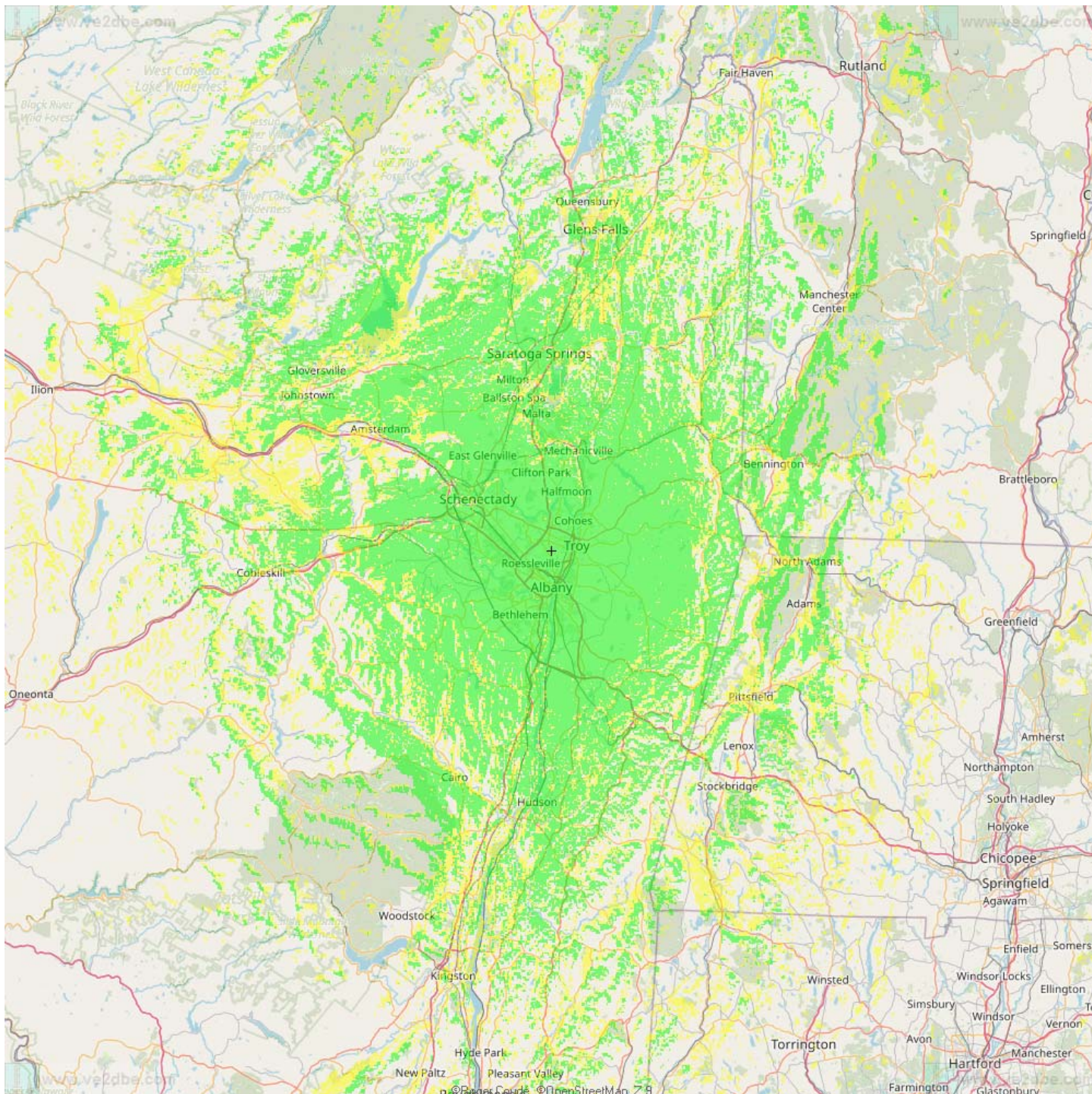
In addition, he plans to continue to write and publish the club's newsletter and maintain its website.

Next Membership Meeting - October 9, 2024 - 7 pm

VHF Repeater Plot - Siena College

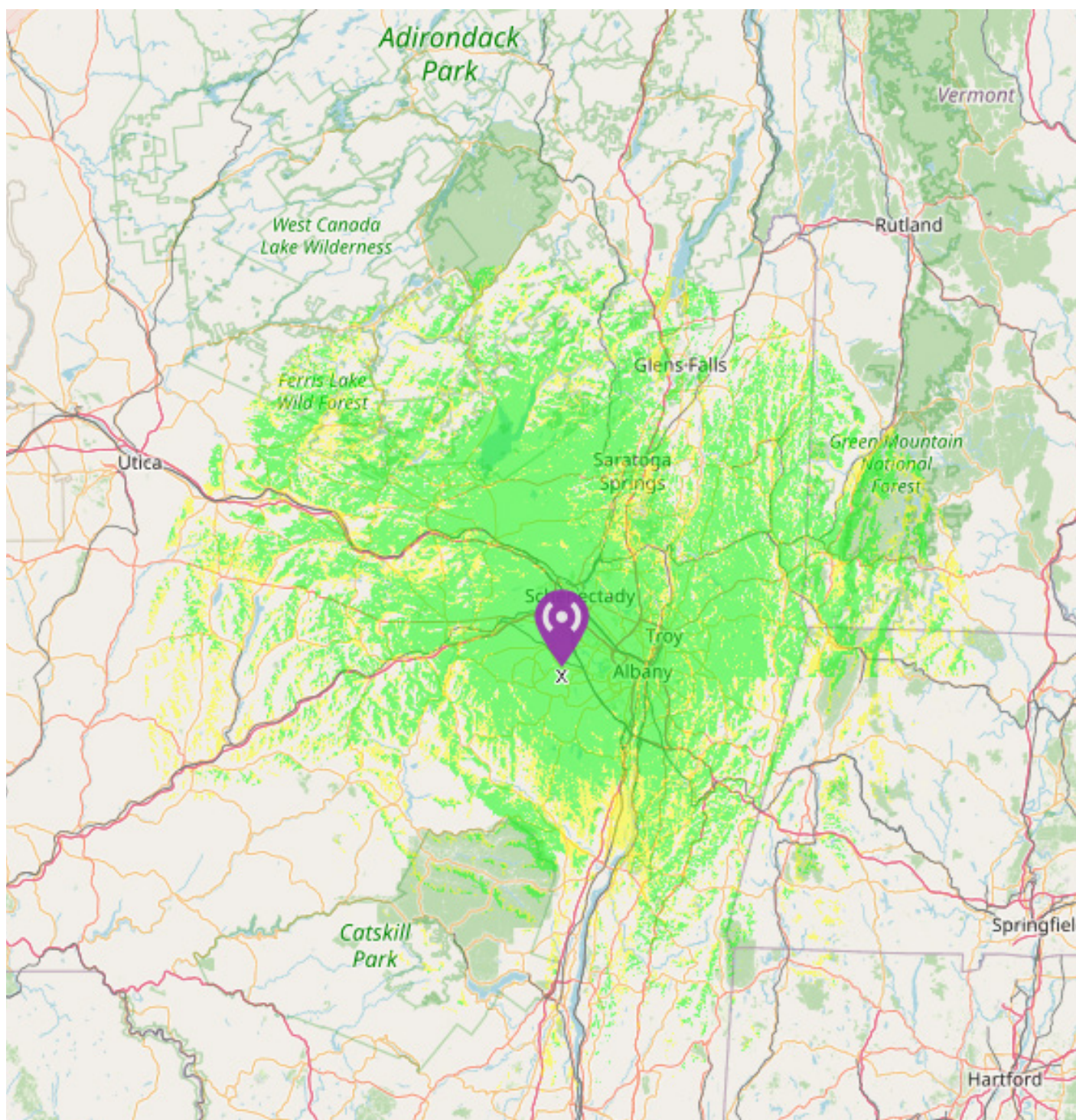
Should EGARA be able to relocate its main VHF repeater to the Siena College site on Route 9 in Loudonville, the coverage pattern is projected in the plot shown below. It assumes an antenna height of 80 feet and a repeater output power of 75 watts. Green represents the primary coverage area, with the yellow areas representing secondary coverage.

The next page shows the projected coverage pattern from the former WTEN-TV analog site located in the Helderberg Mountains in the Town of New Scotland.



VHF Repeater Plot - Former WTEN-TV Site

The second site being explored for the club's main VHF repeater would be off Pinnacle Road in the Town of New Scotland using the former analog transmitter site of WTEN-TV atop the Helderberg Mountains. This coverage area assumes a transmitter output of 50 watts. The coverage would be comparable to the club's current UHF repeater on 444.700, which is already located on the Helderbergs. Again, green represents the primary coverage area, while yellow marks secondary coverage.



ARES Presentation On Tap for November

Fred Halley, W2EMS, the Section Emergency Coordinator, ARRL Eastern New York Section, will be the featured speaker at EGARA's regular club meeting on Wednesday, November 13th starting at 7 pm. He will provide an overview of ARES -- the Amateur Radio Emergency Services -- as well as updates on the program and how hams can get involved.



Amateur Radio operators belonging to ARES (and its predecessor, the Amateur Radio Emergency Corps) have responded to local and regional disasters since the 1930s, including the attacks of September 11, 2001, and category 5 Hurricane Katrina. During the Katrina event, more than a thousand ARES members assisted in the aftermath and provided communications for the American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, and others related to the relief effort. After Katrina, Hancock County, Mississippi, lost all contact with the outside world except through ARES operators who served as 911 dispatchers and relaying messages.

ARES has deployed for a variety of other emergencies and disasters, including the 2003 North America blackout which covered a wide area of North America. Its scope included Cleveland, Detroit, and New York City. Telephones and cell phone systems were overloaded and Amateur Radio's ability to operate off the grid was put to the test. On Long Island many pieces of health and welfare traffic were passed on VHF and HF nets. This was not the first time that Amateur Radio operators assisted during a blackout in New York City. On July 13, 1977, lightning caused a power outage across the city and most of its suburbs. Radio operators started communication nets on simplex and on a repeater located in the Chrysler Building.

Organizational structure

ARES groups are volunteer Amateur Radio operators united in the common purpose of providing emergency and auxiliary communications service to public safety and public service organizations. Most ARES units are autonomous and operate locally. Although the Amateur Radio Emergency Service is a program of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) in the U.S., the structure is more supportive than directive in nature, providing mostly mutual aid in the event of large-scale emergencies. As long as local units are operating in the best interests of Amateur Radio in general and the ARRL in particular, intervention from the national organization is minimal.

ARES groups are generally organized by city or county and are made up of volunteers from the local area. The only requirements to join ARES are a willingness to serve and a valid amateur radio license.

Groups are organized locally by the person holding the position of Emergency Coordinator (EC). The EC maintains full responsibility for organizing the local groups and serving as their leader during operations. The EC is an ARRL or RAC member, and is generally the point of contact for those wishing to perform Emergency Communications in their local area. They may appoint one or several AECs (Assistant Emergency Coordinator) to oversee certain geographical areas, or they may appoint by function such as the SKYWARN severe weather spotting network, Net Managing, Training Direction, or Public Information, or maybe a mix of these. Some members may be appointed as Official Emergency Stations and are trained to serve specific duties such as being a net controller.

Mutual assistance

ARES in the U.S. has Memorandums of Understanding in support of many organizations including the American Red Cross, National Weather Service, Department of Homeland Security, Salvation Army, and the Society of Broadcast Engineers.

(See the related story on page 6)

A Blast From the Past

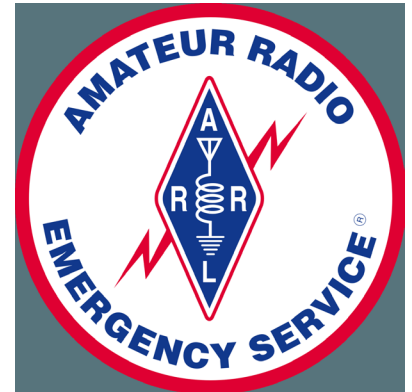


On the Beam News & Notes

Saratoga County Seeking ARES Leaders

Saratoga County has an immediate need to fill three open positions in its ARES leadership to ensure the County continues providing trained radio operators and equipment during severe storms, natural disasters, and other events requiring reliable communications. What is ARES?

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment, with their local ARES leadership, for communications duty in the public service when disaster strikes. Amateur radio operators use their training, skills, and equipment to provide communications during emergencies When All Else Fails®. Hams serve our communities when storms or other disasters damage critical communication infrastructure, including cell towers, and wired and wireless networks. Amateur radio can function completely independently of the Internet and phone systems.



Fred Halley, W2EMS, was appointed as Section Emergency Coordinator (EC) in January of this year, and is reaching out to see if there are any radio operators who are ready and willing to step up and volunteer some of their time working with other Saratoga County ARES leadership to ensure they are prepared when the call for help arrives. The open positions include:

- Saratoga County Emergency Coordinator (EC)
- Saratoga County Assistant Emergency Coordinator (AEC) (Training)
- Saratoga County Assistant Emergency Coordinator (AEC) (Logistics)

If you or someone you know would be interested in taking on one of these positions please contact Fred directly via email or phone at any time by phone at 518-505-3733 or by email at W2EMS@ARRL.NET

If you would like to learn more about ARES, point your web browser to the following ARRL site: <https://www.arrl.org/ares> this site has a lot of great information for review.

Boot Camp to Help Hams Get on the Air

The Nashua Area Radio Society in New Hampshire will be holding an online Ham Bootcamp on Saturday, November 9, 2024, from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm ET. The Ham Bootcamp program includes a series of demonstrations and tutorials designed to help new, inactive, and prospective hams gain the skills and information needed to get on the air.

It is open to any interested ham or prospective ham in the U.S. and Canada and there is no charge to attend. Ham Bootcamp activities are provided online via a series of sessions geared towards Technician class licensees, prospective hams, General class licensees and higher.

Bootcamp participants will find all of the material interesting and fun no matter what their focus or license level. The online Bootcamp program is available to all licensed and prospective hams. The link to register for the next Ham Bootcamp session can be found at: <https://www.n1fd.org/register-ham-bootcamp/>

For questions or additional information, contact bootcamp@n1fd.org.



Project Update: The CCA Transmitter

It was two years ago this month that members of EGARA saved the former WABY transmitter from the trash heap. Since that time, Steve VanSickle, WB2HPR, has been tediously working to restore the circa 1974 Kilowatt AM rig to convert it to the 80 meter ham band for club use. The project is now entering its final stages and on air testing is coming up soon. So, here's a look at this ambitious project.



Flashback: November 22, 2022 ...

After removing the transmitter's heavy transformers, preparations are made to place it on a dolly to move it out of the building.

The transmitter would find its way to Steve VanSickle's home in Troy to begin the restoration work.



Despite its weight and size, club members were able to remove the CCA 1000D transmitter from the old WABY building just prior to the building's demolition.



After a weeks-long complete and thorough cleaning, components have been checked and replaced as needed. Then testing on each section took place. Here, the exciter is undergoing testing for proper operation.

The project is now entering its final stages, with on air testing and operation planned for the near future.



The project has included the installation of 220 volt electrical service to Steve's garage where the work is being done. A 220 volt power cord was also fitted to the transmitter itself.



Conversion to the 80 Meter ham band has required careful re-tuning of coils and other components.

In the picture above, the 2nd harmonic trap has been meticulously rebuilt by Steve and tuned for 2.8 mHz.

Getting Started With Radio Astronomy



There are many facets to being a radio hobbyist, but if you've ever had the urge to dabble in radio astronomy, check out "The Novice's Guide to Amateur Radio Astronomy," a presentation at the 2024 conference of the Society of Amateur Radio Astronomers. A video of the presentation is available on YouTube at:

https://youtu.be/uz15GmR_aXc?si=D1BHcmCG1p6vg9O-

In that presentation, Nathan Butts covers everything from why you should take up the hobby, how to set up a software defined radio (SDR) receiver, and how to re-purpose old computers. This is just one of a series of videos recently posted from the conference — check out their channel to see them all.

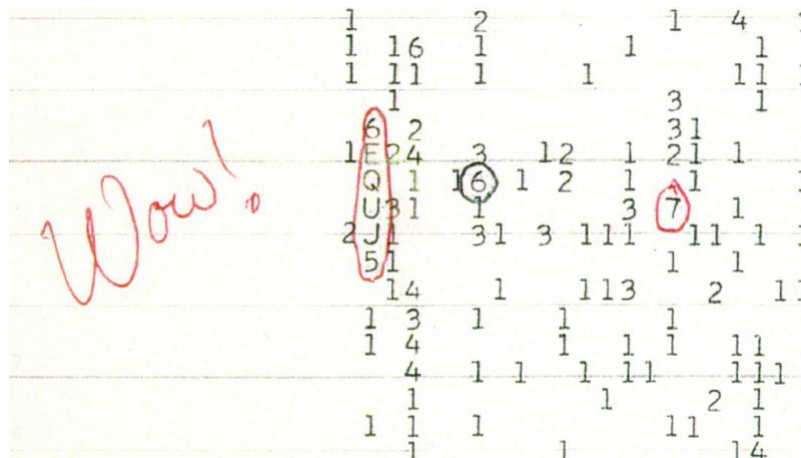
Unlike optical astronomy, you can listen to the universe by radio during the day or night, rain or shine. You don't need a dark sky, although these days, a quiet radio location might be hard to find. Nathan also points out that some people just want to crunch data collected by others, and that's fun, too. There are many ways to get involved from designing hardware, writing software, or — of course — just listening.

It has never been easier to get involved. Cheap software-defined radios are perfect for this sort of work, and many of us have computers capable of collecting and processing the data collected. Maybe you'll be the next person to hear what's known as a Wow! Signal (see below). If you are worried about fielding an antenna, many people re-purpose satellite dishes.

The Wow! Signal

On a balmy August evening in 1977, an enormous radio telescope in a field in the middle of Ohio sat silently listening to the radio universe. Shortly after 10:00 PM, the Earth's rotation slewed the telescope through a powerful radio signal whose passage was noted only by the slight change in tone in the song sung every twelve seconds by the line printer recording that evening's data.

When the data was analyzed later, an astronomer's marginal exclamation of the extraordinarily powerful but vanishingly brief blip would give the signal its forever name: The Wow! Signal. How we came to hear this signal, what it could possibly mean, and where it might have come from are all interesting details of an event that left a mystery in its wake -- one that citizen scientists are now looking into with a fresh perspective. If it was sent from a region of space with habitable planets, it's at least worth a listen.



EGARA October Meeting Minutes

- The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.
- Introductions were made by all members. Ten members were present.
- President Bryan Jackson, W2RBJ made his report:
- He noted that the Fall Cruise was scheduled for 10/26/2024. Jackson also reminded everyone that this would be the last year for the Cruise on the Albany Port Authority boat since our Captain, Dave William, N2VLQ, plans to retire.
- He also announced that Steve VanSickle, WB2HPR donated a large amount of coax and spare 220 repeater duplexers to the club.
- It was announced that the Club purchased a Duplexer for the VHF replacement repeater from Tom Scorsone, KC2FCP, but that the Club needed an antenna and a site for the repeater. Jackson noted that he would reach out to Bob Isby, K2RHI for any updates he may have on a location (see story on page 1).
- Jackson also noted that the TARA Club was looking for volunteers for Pumpkin Patrol on October 30th and 31st and informed members to reach out to Karen Smith, KS2O if they were interested in assisting.
- It was mentioned that the Club was still looking for a 30" electric stove for RCSAR and that he wanted to resume cleaning and tidying up the building again, but that someone would need to coordinate a schedule.
- Jackson announced that the Hamfest Volunteer Appreciation Pizza Party still needed to be scheduled and proposed having it at the Manor House. Members also discussed where to go for the Club Christmas Party. Moscatiello's was suggested as our usual choice, but the Club also sounded interested in the Towne Pub in West Sand Lake, where a private room was potentially available to reserve.
- It was also announced that the monthly issues of the Club newsletter, Sidebands had resumed.
- Jackson also stated that he did not plan to run for President of the Club again with the upcoming election in April but would continue to actively support the club (see story on page 1).
- Old Business: There was a discussion about potentially consolidating the EGARA and TARA clubs so as to have a more robust member base, no members were against the idea, but everyone felt it was something that needed to be discussed more before making a decision to approach TARA with the idea. David Jaeger, K2DEJ suggested that EGARA and TARA should consider teaming up for Field Day 2025 as a way to create a closer relationship between the two clubs.
- There was also a discussion about building a shed on the property behind the RCSAR building to allow for storage of Club equipment.
- New Business: No New Business was discussed.
- Treasurer's Report: Treasurer, Peter Brickman, KD2YLG, provided an update on club finances and also noted that Don Mayotte, KB2CDX had donated the pizza for the meeting. He also reported dues payments were made by several members.
- A YouTube video on antennas was shown and the meeting ended at approximately 8:00 pm.
- Minutes recorded by Secretary David Jaeger, K2DEJ.

WB2HPR Makes a Generous Donation

A large length of expensive coax antenna line was recently donated to the club by Steve VanSickle, WB2HPR. In addition, he also gave the club two 220 MHz duplexers to have on hand as spares. As a 501c3 non-profit organization, such donations to the club are tax deductible.

The coax line will likely be used in the installation of the club's planned new VHF repeater which will replace the one taken off the air when Spectrum shut down its site in Loudonville where it was housed (see story on page 1).

To assist the club, Vice President Walt Synder, N2WJR, was kind enough to offer to transport the coax and duplexers with his truck and store them temporarily in the garage at his home.



Walt and Steve take a breather after loading the coax and duplexers

An Incredible Amateur Radio Rescue Story

By Don Gardner, W7PJ, ARRL Idaho Section Emergency Coordinator

On the evening of September 21, 2024, Greg Owen, WX7Z, heard an amateur radio emergency call on the VHF frequency known as the national simplex calling frequency, 146.52 MHz. Ed Clark, K7ELC, was calling to get medical help for a 51-year-old man who had overturned his four-wheeler.

Mac Mackintosh, W7ENZ, found the accident and injured man near his property where there isn't any cellphone service. Mackintosh had given his hand held radio to Clark to make the call for help while he gave aid to the injured man. The injuries were serious... head trauma, broken collarbone, broken ribs, and difficulty breathing.

Owen, in return, called 911 to request help. An ambulance, Life Flight helicopter and law enforcement were dispatched to the location, which was 35 minutes outside Orofino, Idaho. Meanwhile, Owen continued using his amateur radio to relay updates to the dispatcher. The injured man was transported to the hospital via Life Flight and, at last report, was recovering from his injuries.

Gardner said hams in Idaho support an old national program called the "Wilderness Protocol" which encourages the use of the national simplex calling frequency, 146.52 MHz.

"As amateur radio operators, we train to be available to help when help is needed. The more that ham radio operators listen to the radio, the more chance there is that someone will be listening to take your emergency call. This is something that has been used many times throughout this county and here in Idaho," he said. "This is another incredible story to share."

Need to Pay Your Club Dues?

It's as easy as www.EGARA.org/pay-dues

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CALENDAR

November 13, 2024 - Monthly Club Membership Meeting, 7 pm at Rensselaer County Search & Rescue. ARES Update.

December 11, 2024 - Annual Club Christmas Party. Location to be announced.



GEAR FOR SALE

- **Classic Hallicrafters SX-130 Receiver.** Freshly overhauled and aligned. Offers a 4 band, 7 tube superheterodyne receiver covering AM (broadcast band) and shortwave from 1.725 to 31.5 MHz. The frequency range covers foreign and domestic shortwave broadcasts, amateurs, aircraft, marine and standard AM broadcasts. The receiver also provides for the reception of code (CW), voice (AM) and upper and lower single sideband (SSB) signals. \$125.

Contact Bryan at: W2RBJ@Outlook.com

Pro Tip: When to Turn Off ALC

- When using an SSB transceiver for digital modes like PSK, RTTY, or one of the WSJT family, the ALC (Automatic Level Control) system, including speech processing, should be off.
- If you can't turn ALC completely off, set your audio level so that the ALC meter shows no activity during transmissions.
- ALC changes the signal level, distorting the modulation and making it harder to decode.



The East Greenbush Amateur Radio Association

Organized in 1998, by Bert Bruins, N2FPJ, (SK) and Chris Linck, N2NEH, the East Greenbush Amateur Radio Association, an ARRL affiliate, is committed to providing emergency services, educational programs, and operating resources to amateur radio operators and residents of the Capital Region of New York State. The club station is W2EGB. The club also has several VHF and UHF repeaters open to club members and the public.

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