



BV ARC BEACON



Newsletter of the Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club
AMATEUR RADIO FOR SOUTHWEST HOUSTON AND FORT
BEND COUNTY

AUGUST 2021

VOLUME 45 ISSUE 8

August 12 Zoom Meeting

The program for August will be a presentation on the National Traffic system and messaging handling. The presentation will be done by Ron Bosch, KE4DRF and Sheree Horton, WM5N. With hurricane season around us, there is always a possibility of amateur radio activation. So, it will always be helpful to understand the basics on traffic handling and passing messages. So attend the Zoom meeting and let Ron and Sheree teach old dogs new tricks!



MUSEUM SHIPS OPERATING EVENT – August 28-29

1200z 28 August – 0300z 29 August 2020. 15 Hours.

To make up for the MSWE weather related scrub, we are planning an August 28-29th mobilization to participate in the W/VE Islands QSO Party. Since we'll be operating from the "rarely" activated Pelican Island, we should be on the good side of some pile-ups. We'll run the activation, pretty much like the MSWE event (we'll classify as an W/VE Island Expedition). The event rules only allow one station, multi operator, per callsign. We'll run two stations with the Stewart/Cavalla callsign (N5FKP) and another with the Selma callsign (W5MSQ)

<https://usislands.org/qso-party-rules/>

To participate, contact Mark Janzer (K5MGJ) @ k5mgj@yahoo.com



ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BEING THE EDITOR OF A NATIONALLY DISTRUBUTED PUBLICATION?

Really! The August issue is going to 9 states, from CT to CA and approximately 20 TX counties. As long as you remain editor, you are guaranteed of not getting a pay cut. Each month it only takes about 6-7 hours of your time when the press deadlines approach, and only about 2 hours during the rest of the month.

Obviously, to be an Editor, you must have excellent command of "The King's English." You also must be reliable, able to meet deadlines and be timely month-to-month. For further information, contact the editor of this publication. Contact info is given on the last page of this issue. The current Editor has held the position for 17 years, and obviously feels that it is a very worthwhile cause but is looking forward to "passing the baton" and to the infusion of new ideas .

The Prez Says

It was short notice to get it arranged but Field Day was pulled off in the “new normal” world. Even though it was not our normal Quad Club blowout, “Field Day Lite” or “Field Day – A Relaxed State” was a success. It seemed everyone had a great time with a high attendance of 67 on Saturday. We had a very active GOTA station again with more operators than ever before (thank you Dave, WD8RZA for your hard work). As always, I want to thank Bill Cordell for ramrodding it this year on antennas and facility coordination. Both Bill and the antenna installation team did a great job. And a great big thanks to Dynamic Duo of Daphne and Kelli for handling the most important part of Field Day – Food! Fort Bend County Emergency Management deserves a big thanks on their bringing their communications trailer at the last minute. And, of course, a big thank to everyone that helped on set-up and tear-down. Now on to the 2022 event, which hopefully will be normal Quad Club event. Oh.....I knew I forgot something the Field Day score. The score for BVARC is 5966 this year, not counting the individuals that operated from home and listed BVARC as their club. The score was not as high as the past but it was a great time for everyone (and a great turnout as well!).

The BVARC’s July 8th general meeting was a last-minute change. We had basically an open-mic night with lots of great questions. This is something that may start to become a normal once-a-month event so some of the new hams can pick us old farts’ brain (if we can remember anything).

So John Thurmond, K5JBT, will be doing a ZOOM presentation on Arduino and its general and practical applications. Stay tuned for the date when John will show everyone that the Arduino microcontroller can do more than blink lights or control garage doors.

BVARC’s annual ICE CREAM social date had to be changed due to the increase of the COVID risk level to Orange (yesterday as this goes to press). It will now occur on October 14, probably at Duhacsek Park. The great team of Daphne and Kelli will most likely be handling the Ice Cream scoops and toppings. Check elsewhere in the newsletter for more information.

Due to a change at Sugar Land Parks department, we have lost our meeting space at the Recreational center through December. For now, we have Duhacsek Park reserved the second Thursday of the month through December. Stay tuned for meeting information and programs. If anyone has an idea for a meeting location, let the BVARC BOD know.

Hope to see everyone at the ice cream social.

73
N5VCX



MINUTES
Board of Directors Meeting
Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club
July 2021

The BOD meeting for July was cancelled, thus there are no minutes to publish this month. Look for the August BOD Minutes in the next issue of the BVARC BEACON

BVARC Annual Ice Cream Social

Date change: October 14

I was curious about the lyrics of the Ice Cream Song, so I looked them up.

Ice Cream

[Tydus](#)

Hey everybody
Do you know what time it is (yeah)
It's Ice Cream time (wooo)
Let's go

I got the Cookie Dough
I wanna say hello
Chocolate or Vanilla
Tydus is your fella
Scooping it cold
Coolest 4 year old
Cookies and Cream
That's my dream

Ice Cream Ice Cream
I be selling Ice Cream
I be making Ice Cream
Icey Icey Ice Cream
Ice Cream Ice Cream
I be selling Ice Cream
I be making Ice Cream
Icey Icey Ice Cream

I scream (Wooo)
You scream (Ahhh)
I scream (Wooo)
You scream (Ahhh)

There was more but I figured that was enough. So, with this an introduction, the BVARC annual Ice Cream social. Note: Because of the resurgence in COVID-19 (Threat level in Harris County raised today to Orange – the 2nd highest) will be held this year on Thursday, October 14 at Duhacsek Park in Sugar Land. Ice should start being scooped about 7pm through about 8:30 bring your appetite.

Daphne and Kelli, the geniuses of the culinary arts, will be the Ice Masters again dishing it out to everyone. There will be various toppings, and extras including cake and cookies. Soft drinks and water also be available. We might even have coffee this time.

So, bring your bib and get ready for a great get-together!

Mike
N5VCX



The Radio Hotel – Ground – Friend or Foe ?

by Rick – W5RH

Earth is where you find it,
Ground is where you make it,
Neutral sometimes isn't,
Sometimes they are all the same.

Ground. In electrical terms it is defined as (and I plagerize) “the reference point in an electrical circuit from which voltages are measured, a common return path for electric current, or a direct physical connection to the earth”. But then that definition needs to be further defined depending on the frequency of the electrical signal: DC, AC, Low Band RF, MW RF HF RF and upwards of VHF, UHF, SHF, etc. Ground, and the act or practice of “Grounding”, is almost a separate field of endeavor within the realm of Amateur Radio. Hams must contend with ground in all phases of the hobby. Grounding our equipment and station. Grounding antennas for static discharge and lightning. Providing ground reference for our vertical antennas. All of which are implemented differently.

I am going to off load the AC and DC station and equipment grounding subject to someone else. There are plenty of references out there as to what to do and how to do it. One excellent reference is H. Ward Silver, N0AX, Grounding and Bonding for the Radio Amateur ARRL Press. It is a \$9.99 Kindle book too. My thrust, if I can have a thrust within this short Beacon column is RF grounding: the good, the bad and the ugly.

Let's start with the bad and the ugly. Most of us have experienced “getting bit” by a hot mic or distorted audio in our ears caused by RF getting back into the xmit chain. RF grounding is a slippery fish at times if you are fighting that ghost. Common solutions to equipment focused grounding are choked cables, bypass capacitors, properly terminated cables, etc. which all tend to diminish the problem and hopefully eliminate it, if enough solutions are placed in the proper locations. (Reference N0AX's book above . Also <http://www.audiosystemsgroup.com/RFI-Ham.pdf>)

The good. Ground is most times our friend when it comes to antennas. Take a dipole for instance. There is a definite benefit of using a horizontal polarized antenna versus a vertically polarized antenna. The benefit? Ground gain. Just by using a horizontal antenna we can get a gain in signal strength of about 6 dB. The caveat being – gain at the expense of not having an omni-directional radiation pattern and other factors that come into consideration between a vertical and horizontal skyhook – like angle of the main radiation lobe.

On a deployed vertical antenna, ground has a massive influence on the strength and efficiency of the antennas radiating performance. Many articles and chapters of books have been written about ground radial systems (the other half of a ¼ wavelength vertical antenna system. Best practice says, “the more wire on the ground the better”. Proper deployment of proper length wires in a 360 degree radial fashion makes things as good as it gets. The foe side of ground in a vertical system is that in some vertical deployments the earth ground portion can be a sink for the precious current that we use to radiate our signal, by the earth itself absorbing the current and causing losses within the system.

So, what can you take from this crew cut reference to RF ground? One thing is that it is definitely a portion of our technological hobby to which we should pay attention. Probably the most targeted information source that I have found concerning antennas was **Rudy Severns, N6LF, Design of Radial Ground Systems** (with associated comments and articles) https://www.antennasbyn6lf.com/design_of_radial_ground_systems/ [Check it out.](#)

Ground and the practice of grounding should be your friend and in most instances can provide enhanced station performance. Have a look at the discussion concerning lightning on the BVARC List serve Archives July 6th – “N5XZ Lightning Strike – Seeking Guidance”. The List Serve Archives can be found by clicking on:

<https://www.mail-archive.com/bvarc@bvarc.org/>

As part of your overall Ham Radio station building, pay attention to your friend “ground”, no matter the frequency or purpose. You'll be glad you did. Enjoy your hobby – Rick – W5RH

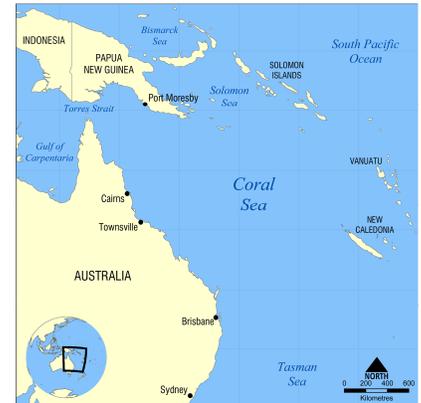
Where in the World is . . .
Chesterfield Reefs (FK/C, TX3)
CQ Zone 30 IOTA OC-176

The official prefix for this entity is FK/C denoting it is part of New Caledonia, a French territory comprising hundreds of islands in the South Pacific. If you listen carefully, you can probably hear the strains of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Bali Hai* from the musical, *South Pacific*.

“Ah yes, “Most people live on a lonely island, in the middle of a foggy sea.
“ but I digress.

The Chesterfields are an archipelago of New Caledonia located in the Coral Sea, 340 miles northwest of the main island of New Caledonia.

You might remember the Coral Sea as the place, where the US Navy stopped the Japanese advance on Australia in WW II. The battle is unique as the first naval battle where opposing ships never came in sight of each other.



Far from the tropical island we seek in Polynesia the Chesterfields are uninhabited island sand mostly just a few feet above sea level and sometimes referred to as the Chesterfield Reefs, They are the most important of a number of uninhabited coral sand cays. Some are awash and liable to shift with the wind while others are stabilized by the growth of grass, creepers and low trees. The Chesterfield Reefs are now part of the territory of New Caledonia.

Tiny in size but aggressively pursued by many hams for its standing on the list of most wanted, there have been several DX-peditions in recent years.

In 2009, two amateurs, George Walter, AA7JV and Tomi Pekarik, HA7RY mounted a small but successful venture as TX3A. The two operators managed over 36,000 QSOS in 28 days. Using two Elecraft K-3's and a series of antennas for HF operation.



Perhaps the most organized group, the Perseverance DX Group mounted a major effort in 2015. The group assembled a team of 12 operators, 7 Elecraft K-Line stations and two Expert Linear 1.3K FA's. The equipment Along with all the usual stuff - Keyers, computers, antennas, food, medical supplies, generators, and gasoline was loaded aboard the Expedition vessel, Evohe. The team set out for a brisk ocean cruise to an uninhabited island. The team arrived on 1 Oct and went QRT on 11 Oct about 1700 UTC.



According to Club log's list of most wanted DX entities, Chesterfield ranks 25th on the list. Congratulations to all whose signal made the trip.

A trip to Chesterfield in 2020 was planned by Greg Marco, W6IZT and Hal Turley, W8HC in March 2020 was postponed until 2021 due to COVID-19, global travel restrictions and safety concerns,

Reporting from the Dark Side,
Ron, K5HM



BVARC Rag Chew Net

Below is the BVARC Rag Chew Net check-in information:

06/23/21, K5LKJ(NCS), W5VOM, W1BG, K5LJ, W5TKZ, K5JPP, W2WF (Katy), W5ALW, KF5HYU, N5VCM, KE4DRF, KB7QL (Rustin, LA)(R), KI5MRF/5, KF5ONT, KD4MCB (Montgomery). (15 Check-Ins) Solar Cycle 25: SFI = 79, SN = 12, A = 5, K = 1 / Band Rpt: Fair

06/30/21, K5LKJ (NCS), KD5SBA, W5VOM, K5LJ, K5JPP, K2MPP, KB7QL (Rustin, LA), KF5HYU, N5VCM, K5TNL (R), KI5LFZ, KI5NPL, KI5NCO (Killeen). (13 Check-Ins)
Solar Cycle 25: SFI = 94, SN = 56, A = 12, K = 4 / Band Rpt: Fair

07/07/21, K5LKJ (NCS), K2MPP, KG5SBA, K5LJ, KI5NPM, W5JYB (Waskom), K5JPP, W5TKZ, K5LEM, W5VOM, W2WF (Katy), N5VCM, W5ALW, KI5HOC. (14 Check-Ins)
Solar Cycle 25: SFI = 76, SN = 52, A = 5, K = 1 / Band Rpt: Fair

07/14/21, K5LKJ (NCS), W5TOM, K5LJ, W5TKZ, W5ALW, N5VCM, W5VOM, KG5LJZ (Clear Lake – Houston), KB7QL (Rustin, LA), AA5OA Pearcy, AR, KI5LSB (Pearland), K5JPP, K5IZO/5 (Jasper), KD5SBA, AB4BU (Marianna, FL), KL7AX (Katy)(R). (16 Check-Ins)
Solar Cycle 25: SFI = 72, SN = 11, A = 5, K = 4 / Band Rpt: Poor

(M) = mobile (P) = Portable (R) = Relay (RCS) = remote controlled station (T) = telephone check-in

Net conditions have been fair to good this month. Fire up the rig and learn what others are doing and share in their experiences. Come join in the conversation each Wednesday evening.

Regards.
John K5LKJ

Cutting Through the Static

For Newbies and Everyone Else

There's nothing like a good kit project to settle a person into a good groove. I put together my first electronics kit when I was in my early teens. I was given a Heathkit "six transistor radio" to put together and it engaged me and my father for quite a period of time. This was before printed circuit boards were widely used, so it was all point-to-point wiring, and it was a lengthy project, especially for a newby kid. Soldering was a new skill for me, but with my talented father watching over me, I quickly got the hang of it.



I'll never forget those wonderful evenings and weekends spent sitting around the dining room table, with next-up parts laid out for easy access. It was a great learning experience and of course the reward was an excellent am radio that worked better than any small transistor radio that I had encountered at the time. I wish I knew what happened to it, having apparently gotten lost in the journey of

growing up.

Unfortunately, the Heathkit projects many of us once enjoyed are no longer available. Of course, finished projects are still on display in some ham shacks and available for sale at the occasional ham fest. There is a modern Heathkit outfit, but IMHO it's a mere shadow of its namesake.

On the positive side, there are tons of kits available from a variety of sources on the internet –from Amazon to Zenith (Zenith Aircraft kits). Just do a search like "ham radio kits," "electronics kits," or "amateur radio kits," and your computer will provide you with plenty of options.

One kit I enjoyed a lot as an adult was the uBitX (pronounced Micro-Bit-X) SSB transceiver from India. It's a good starter kit because it doesn't require a lot of soldering and there's lots of helping material available on the internet. There are lots of expansion plans available as well. If you choose the basic kit for \$129, you'll need to figure out a way to house the unit. But for little more than \$200 you can get the full package – nice case, speaker and all.



A kit I am intrigued with lately is the Mercury IIIs, a solid state, legal limit linear amp kit from km3km.com, made entirely in the USA. Most of the heavy lifting is done before you ever get your hands on it, and that may be a turn off for some. The price might be tough to swallow as well at \$2499. But if you've priced legal limit solid state amps lately, you'll recognize that price as reasonable at worst. As always, caveat emptor.

If your goal is to learn more about the workings of electronics, I would suggest finding online, video tutorials. I enjoy Mr Carlson's Lab on YouTube. He specializes in restoring old gear, especially amplifiers. He also sponsors a Patreon learning course, starting at two dollars a month, with projects for you to build and instruction in the tools of design and repair, including meters and oscilloscopes. Paul is a ham in Canada, VE7ZWZ. There are many other online tutors as well.

There are hundreds of kits available to the knowledge-hungry ham, from a few dollars to thousands. Take your pick and have fun!

73, JP Pritchard, K5JPP

2021 BVARC Field Day

Getting ready for Field Day this year was a challenge. Due to COVID restrictions and closures, we only received permission for Duhacsek Park three weeks before Field Day so it was a scramble to get everything ready in time. But even with the short time-period, there was still a great turnout.

The attendance was almost as high as in the past - 25 people on Friday helping with set-up, 67 on Saturday helping with set-up and operating and 20 people on Sunday for operations and teardown. We even had three people spend the night Saturday (thank Jeff, Mark and Richard).

The GOTA station had a great turnout with nearly two dozen contacts made and many more spectators. Thanks go out to Dave Scott, WD8RZA for his hard work and Fort Bend County Emergency Management for the use of the communications trailer.

The score for Field Day is 5966, not counting the individual operators working from home. That should push us over the 6000 mark and maybe even higher.

It may have not been a high score in points, but it was a high score in participation and fun. We had lots of new hams come out to see what Field Day was all about and several of them got on the air for the first time.

Again, thanks to everyone for a great Field Day.

Mike
N5VCX



July VE - FCC TESTING SESSIONS RESULTS

Bayland Community Center is open, they are currently back to 100% capacity, so no headcount limits.
For Saturday, July 10th, we had 3 candidates and conducted 6 tests.

New Licensees:

M. Terry (Technician)
M. Stingley (Technician)
E. Wolf (Technician)

Congratulations to all!

A GREAT, thank you to the VEs in attendance – K5GOL, K5LJ and W5GX!

The next BVARC test session is Saturday August 7th, at 10:30am. **The testing fee is still \$15.** The date which this will change to \$15 test and \$35 license fee (totaling \$50), has not yet been determined, but is expected sometime this summer. Our current understanding is that VEs will collect \$15 at the test session and the \$35 fee will be collected directly by the FCC.

Examination sessions are held each month, usually on the same day as the Saturday BVARC Board meeting. These sessions are at the Bayland Park Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St., Houston TX 77074
Details for candidates are found at www.bvarc.org/home/amateur-license/

Call/Text Mark Janzer, K5MGJ at (832) 875-0526 or eMail: (k5mgj@yahoo.com) to pre-register.

Russian Woodpecker Site

Submitted by Mike Hardwick, N5VCX



One of Many Across the Country



Hamfests

(typically within 200 miles of Houston)

Hamfest info for the next few months. More information at: <http://www.arrl.org/hamfests.html#listing>

10/02/2021 - HamEXPO Fall 2021

Location: Belton, TX

Type: ARRL Hamfest

Sponsor: Temple Amateur Radio Club

Websi

te: <https://www.tarc.org/>



Many CW operators like a heavy base for their key. If you are one, try springing for this one (you will probably have to take a 2nd mortgage on your house to get it). The only clue the Editor has is that it is from the British Navy.

BRAZOS VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

This newsletter, the **BVARC BEACON**, is a monthly publication of the Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club. For a full listing of officers and information about BVARC, please go to www.bvarc.org. Detailed information will be published in the **BEACON** every 3 or 4 months. Similarly, the "Eating Schedule" will be published every 3 or 4 months unless there is a change.

General membership dues are \$25.00 per year, with student dues \$10.00 per year, additional family members \$5.00 per member per year.

Club meetings are temporarily virtual via ZOOM on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. If you have signed up for the reflector, you will receive notice and the attendance password, etc. It will also be on the website (above) a few days beforehand.

BVARC amateur radio testing has resumed. It takes place typically on the Saturday before the 2nd Thursday of each month at 10:30 AM. Location: Bayland Park Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet, Houston, 77074. BEFORE GOING, because of COVID and scheduling conflicts, please check the BVARC website for any changes. Masks and social distancing are required.

A Public Service Net is held each Monday at 8 p.m. on the 146.94 (minus offset, PL 167.9 tone) repeater.

During COVID-19 a "Stir Crazy Net" is also held weekdays at 12 Noon on the same frequency as above.

A rag chew net is held each Wednesday at 7 p.m. on 3910 KHz +/- 3 KHz.

To obtain information about joining **BVARC** or its activities, see the BVARC website: www.bvarc.org

Other contacts include:

President:, Mike Hardwick, N5VCX, n5vcx@att.net

Newsletter Editor, John Chauvin, K5IZO, k5izo@yahoo.com

Newsletter Printing, Assembly and Mailing: Daphne Rawlinson, K5VQY, daphne_rawlinson@hotmail.com.

Jeff Greer, W5JEF, greerjw@hotmail.com, Mark Brantana, N5PRD

VOLUME 45, ISSUE 8

August 2021

**BRAZOS VALLEY
AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
P.O. BOX 2997
SUGAR LAND, TX 77487-2997
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

FIRST CLASS POSTAGE

August 12, BVARC General Membership Meeting

August 29, Museum Ships Operating Event



If your mailing label is highlighted in color, it's time to renew your membership!