

President
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Newsletter of the Big Bend Amateur Radio Club, AD5BB

September, 2014

Alpine, Texas

NEXT CLUB MEETING FEATURES McDONALD OBSERVATORY VISIT

At the August meeting in 2013 the club meeting involved a trip to McDonald Observatory for a tour of the Hobby-Eberly Telescope (HET). It was an informative and interesting visit and we have decided to have a return visit for our next meeting on Tuesday, October 14.

One of the enjoyable features of a visit to the Hobby-Eberly Telescope (HET) is the large number of BBARC members who work at McDonald Observatory and specifically the HET. The tour will be led by our own Dr. Jim Fowler (KD5KBU), the computer group manager for the HET. In addition to Jim, three other members of the BBARC also work at the HET: Randy Bryant, K5WWR, is a member of the HETDEX Project Staff, Vicky Riley, KM5V, is a telescope operator, and her husband, Mike Ward, NW5M, is a software engineer.

The tour will begin at 7:30 p.m. at the parking lot at the HET. Once you get to the Observatory, drive past the Visitors Center, go up the hill and take the first left to the silver dome to find the HET. You may drive yourself to the Observatory or meet at the West Texas National Bank in Alpine at 6:30 p.m. to car pool.

Last year we were able to view the beginning of the work to modify the telescope for the Dark Energy Experiment (HETDEX). Now the work is in the final stages and we can view the progress.

We will tour the HET facility and Jim will be able to answer questions regarding its construction, operation, and mission. However, we will not be able to actually view any objects using this telescope. The regular Star Party of the McDonald Observatory Visitor Center will be held on the same night, starting at 8:15 p.m. If you would like to stay for the Star Party, you must make reservations and pay a fee at this website:

<https://mcdonaldobservatory.org/visitors/programs/star-parties>

Paying the fee at the door costs \$14 per person (discounts for seniors and children); buying the tickets in advance on-line lowers the price to \$12. There is no fee for our tour of the HET, but if you wish to participate in the Star Party you will need to leave our tour a little early.

Please plan to join us for this unique program. Since it may be chilly in October at this elevation, please dress warmly.

HOBBY-EBERLY TELESCOPE

The following information is from the Hobby-Eberly website:

The HET was designed and constructed with a unique objective: to gather a very large amount of light, specifically for spectroscopy, at extremely low cost.

A fixed elevation-axis design, based on the radio telescope at Arecibo, and an innovative system for tracking stars, contributed to an 80% reduction in initial costs compared to optical telescopes of similar size. The primary mirror of the HET is the largest yet constructed, at 11.1 x 9.8 meters. At any given time during observations, only a portion of the mirror is utilized. The HET's 9.2 meter effective aperture makes it currently the world's fourth largest optical telescope.

Work is underway to modify the telescope for the upcoming Dark Energy Experiment (HETDEX). A new tracker, the massive framework on the top of the HET, will increase the telescope's field of view. The addition of 130 integral field spectrographs, mounted to the sides of the main framework, will give the HET the ability to map the expansion rate of the early universe, looking back in time billions of years, to measure how clusters of galaxies moved in relation to one another as the universe evolved.

For additional information on HETDEX, click on this url.

<http://hetdex.org/>

W1AW/5 IN TEXAS REPORT

As part of the ARRL's Centennial activities W1AW operated portable from Texas from September 10 through 16. Thanks to the efforts of the Texas coordinators, George, K5TR and Larry, K5OT, an extremely successful operation was held.

In addition to a goal of working a lot of stations, one of the goals was to have stations from across Texas operate during the Texas week. The statistics from the operation show success in accomplishing both these goals.

Summary statistics for W1AW/5:

Number of operators: 59 Number of QSOs: 57,256
Average QSOs per hour: 409 (note: multiple bands / modes)
Highest QSO rate for one hour: 1838

Here in the Big Bend area the following participated in this operation: KA5PVB, KE5OG, N5DO, NW5M, WA5ROE.

SUMMITS ON THE AIR (SOTA) EXPEDITION TO THE BIG BEND REGION

By KD5KC

The weekend of 16-17 Aug 2014 was spent in (and around) a park run by The Nature Conservancy in the Davis Mountains. This park has restricted access, open only a few weekends a year. 15-17 Aug 2014 was one such weekend. There are four summits within the park that qualify for SOTA, and this was an opportunity to grab two of them, plus a couple of other summits in the area. This trip was kind of thrown together last-minute. I got off work at 6pm Friday night, ran home, packed, and hit the road. Much credit and thanks for the success goes to Moni-N5NHC, who gathered up much of my stuff while I worked.

I arrived after midnight at the park. Everyone was asleep, so rather than wake the volunteers, I quietly parked the dog-show van, rolled out my sleeping bag, and went to sleep myself. It had been a 20-hour day for me. It was still dark when the coyotes all across the valley started howling, greeting the dawn. I was tired, and looked at the clock. It was 0545 and still dark, so I thought I could get a little more sleep. I was supposed to meet Mike-AD5A at 0730. Plenty of time. But the coyotes wouldn't let me sleep anymore. So at 0630 I got on the 2m repeater and identified. And there was AD5A, he says about 15 minutes out. What? Shoot..... different time zone! So I got up and got my gear ready.

At 0745 I met Mike-AD5A. He too wanted to activate some summits in the area, and when he learned of my plan he asked to tag along. CERTAINLY. The first summit on the list was Pine Peak, W5T/DW-003 - a 10-pointer with a 3-point summer bonus. The first photo is Mike-AD5A clinging to the side of Pine Peak. The hike to Pine Peak is a pretty tough one. It starts out on a jeep trail, but when the trail turns away from the summit, the climbing begins. There is no trail after that, it is all "bush-whacking". I have never understood that term, in my experience it isn't the bush that gets whacked. For several hundred yards there was nothing to do but climb and suck air, trying to pick a path through the underbrush and rock. Once on the ridge, the slope got easier, but the terrain got tougher. Since this was a first activation of this summit, we did some recon looking at the terrain so we could report the easiest access for the next activators. We finally reached the summit, had a very successful activation, and returned to the vehicle via reverse route. We decided to attempt another summit, then see about dinner.

Next we attempted Mount Locke, W5T/DE-003 - a 10-point easy walk-up with a 3-point summer bonus. I say attempted because there was a raging thunderstorm with bolts of lightning hurling down on the summit. We parked at the base and waited, but it got worse rather than better. So we aborted Mount Locke and drove to Summit 6411.



Summit 6411 is an interesting place. W5T/DW-018, 8-points and a 3-point summer bonus, the road up is all dirt and rock. A good 4x4 can make it, but the last few hundred yards were beyond the ability of the dog show van. On the summit is the home of Terry-K5TDA. Terry was not there, but I set up about 100 yards beyond his home in a clearing under a tree and away from the power lines. Thank you Terry. It was another successful activation, although toward the end some storms were brewing and caused us to hasten our departure. But as we descended the summit we could see that Mount Locke was now in bright sunshine. So we quickly decided to delay dinner and race back to Mount Locke.

Well - in the 45 minutes it took us to leave Summit 6411 and return to Mount Locke, the weather changed yet again. Mount Locke is an easy walk-up, 10-points plus a 3-point summer bonus. The skies were cloudy, and a very light mist was in the air. But it didn't look like a storm, just a very light rain. So off we went. Mike said he was going to start on 20m, so I started on 15m, figuring to run it empty, then move to 30m and 40m. On 15m I only got one contact, the band was very long, and JC-VE3JCW was the only signal I heard. As I was working JC, I could hear thunder growling to the north. With no other takers, and Mike-AD5A still on 20m, I went to 30m. There I quickly worked 5 others. But now the storm was approaching quickly. Mike was packing up now, but there was someone weak on 30m, in the static crashes still calling me, but I just couldn't grab him. I kept trying, but it just wasn't to be. A much louder crash of thunder told me it was time to go. Usually I carefully pack my gear before departing the summit. This time I just grabbed the antenna, and headed down to the van a couple of hundred yards away. I tossed it all on my sleeping bag, and started down the hill. Dinner was in Fort Davis. We had a choice, Lupita's burrito store with no seating, or the pizza joint. The service was really slow (they were quite busy) but the pizza was great. Or maybe we were just hungry.

About sundown Mike took off for home (San Antonio), and I went back to camp overnight at the Nature Conservancy. After cleaning up the van interior and repacking my gear, I settled in and enjoyed listening to the local FM radio station for a bit, read a book for a bit, but eventually the tired muscles won and I

drifted off to sleep with a light rain and lightning flashes all around. I was worried that the next day would be too muddy for a summit.

I woke just before sunrise again to the sound of more serenading coyotes. They were all around me, calling to the still to come sun. But there was no more sleep in me, so I got up and slowly started getting my gear ready. A little after sunrise I started driving to Mount Livermore, about 8 miles from where I was camping. From the locked gate, the hike is 7.15 miles round trip, with an elevation gain of 2100 feet. I made the summit in 2:40, with 31 minutes stopping to rest, drink and take photos. I had the summit all to myself, so I quickly got set up and on the air. First contact was on 40m, with Mike-AD5A. Then 7 more on 30m. I went to 20m and noticed a storm building to the north. 20m was good, with 19 in the log. But that storm was building, thunder growling and now lightning flashing too. And I was well aware that I was on the highest point in the area. So I was glad when no others answered my calls. I had hoped to have a leisurely activation on more bands and even SSB. Instead of pressing my luck, with 27 in the log I decided to call it a day. As I was packing up, a young couple made the summit. As I pulled on my pack, they asked if I would take a photo of them. I did, and they returned the favor. You can see in the second photo the storm in the background as I was prepared to depart.



A very successful weekend, and it put 50 SOTA activator points in my log. I arrived safely in El Paso a bit before sunset. Moni didn't feel like cooking, so we went out for dinner.

Vy73 - Mike - KD5KC.
 El Paso, Texas - DM61rt.
 W5-SOTA Association Manager.
 NA-SOTA info: <http://na-sota.org/>

BBARC MEETINGS

The November meeting will be back at the usual location in Alpine. The program will be led by Bill, W5ATO, and will consist of a briefing for the communication coverage for the Big Bend Ultra 50 mile run to be held at Big Bend Ranch State Park in January 2015.

The December meeting will be a celebration of the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Big Bend Amateur Radio Club. Stay tuned for future details of this fun event.

BIG BEND EMERGENCY NET REPORT From WA5ROE

Date	Check-ins	Length	Remarks
Sep 7	42	25 min	
Sep 14	45	31 min	new member: KC5DZM, Bobby, Hobbs, NM
Sep 21	45	23 min	
Sep 28	40	28 min	new member: KG5BMK, Chuck, Big Bend, TX

Remember – the BBEN meets **every** Sunday on 3922 KHz at 8:30 a.m. Central time (either CST or CDT). Visitors always welcome.

ARRL CENTENNIAL ACTIVITIES

Among the activities in conjunction with the 100th Anniversery of the ARRL is the opportunity to get WAS (Worked All States) by working W1AW portable in each state. W1AW will operate from each state two or more times during 2014.

Here is the schedule for October

October 1 – 7	W1AW/KL7	Alaska
October 1 – 7	W1AW/6	California
October 1 – 7	W1AW/3	District of Columbia
October 8 – 14	W1AW/KL7	Alaska
October 8 – 14	W1AW/6	California
October 8 – 21	W1AW/KH0	Mariana Islands
October 15 – 21	W1AW/8	Michigan
October 15 – 21	W1AW/4	Alabama
October 22 – 28	W1AW/7	Nevada
October 22 – 28	W1AW/8	West Virginia
October 29 – Nov 4	W1AW/7	Wyoming
October 29 – Nov 4	W1AW/1	Massachusetts

Want to know what frequency you can find W1AW portable on at any time? Check this webpage:

www.dxscape.com

Click on “Data Base Search” in the upper right and type in W1AW in the Target Callsign box on the next page, then click Search to see a list of recent spots for W1AW.

PROGRAMMING CHINESE HANDHELD RADIOS

This note appeared on the Central Texas DX and Contest Club reflector:

I came across the info below on the Ten-Tec reflector. It came from DJ0IP, who is an American that lives/works in Germany and is a frequent poster on the Ten-Tec reflector.

The info is the most comprehensive I have seen on how to program the Chinese Handhelds. He used "Chirp" software which I used, with help from John, W5UP, to program my Baofeng Handheld.

I know there have been a lot of questions about how to program them and this should help.

Donald K6RV

<http://www.dj0ip.de/chinese-handhelds/>

REPEATER SYSTEM UPDATE from W5ATO

We have some immediate repeater issues and some on-going issues. Unfortunately the immediate issues just popped up as Doug, N5HYD, is leaving for vacation, so I am going to do what I can. In addition, I'm looking for help with some of the on-going issues.

IMMEDIATE ISSUES:

146.82 Christmas Mountain has suddenly gone back to its old habit of locking up when the weather gets cool and wet. Bruce, N5BBJ, is helping to monitor this and when the weather dries enough for the repeater to act normally, he or I or someone will bring it back up on the system, and knock it back down if it acts up again. If anyone else wants to help, here is the procedure:

[You must input these codes directly on the 82 input, it will not work through the link. You must be on the 146.82 repeater frequencies to do this.]

Key up and input #825 to disable the site when it locks up. When things dry out and the sun starts shining, key up and input #827 to bring the site back on line.

146.920 Glass Mountains seems to have dropped off due to low voltage. At the moment it seems to have come back up, but it went down for some reason and a trip to the site is needed to investigate and possibly solve the problem. Nothing needs to be done remotely since it is not hanging the whole system. It simply is either operating or it isn't. The batteries up there are 5.5 years old and seem the most likely cause. I am picking up more batteries today and will go out and see if that is the problem

as soon as time and road conditions allow.

ON-GOING ISSUES:

147.120 Cibolo Creek Ranch has a mismatched antenna and one remaining solar panel to be installed. We have changed frequencies at this site about three times while seeing if it was a good location and getting a permanent repeater built for it. We now have an antenna tuned for the right frequency and some additional coax to go higher on the tower. We also have the electrical connectors needed to install the third solar panel. This will require a minimum of 2 people, but with the tower work, 1 or 2 more people on the ground crew would be helpful. With the Ultra Run in the BB Ranch State Park in January, I would like to get this project done to get the best coverage we can inside the Park. I'd also like to get it done before the cold weather gets here – sometime in the next month or two.

147.020 Elephant Mountain Hub has three more sections of tower we want to install. The tower sections are there and there are plenty of guy anchors installed at the site. We will need more guy wire. The site works fine as is, but getting the antennas a little higher will give them a little better down angle, a little better efficiency and maybe a little cleaner signal in fringe areas. This is a tower erection project so we need a minimum of at least 4 people. It is not urgent, but we should do this when we can.

Your comments or willingness to volunteer to help on any of these projects is welcome.

THE BARK Newsletter of the BBARC

Big Bend Amateur Radio Club
1402 N. 5th St.
Alpine, Texas 79830

Publisher: Bob Ward, WA5ROE
[wa5roe at juno.com](mailto:wa5roe@juno.com)

Editor: Dave Cockrum, N5DO
[n5do at sbcglobal.net](mailto:n5do@sbcglobal.net)

BIG BEND AMATEUR RADIO CLUB <http://www.bigbendarc.com>

Meetings on the second Tuesday of each month at the West Texas National Bank Building in Alpine, 7:30 P.M. CST/CDT.
ARRL Affiliated Club

MEMBERSHIP AND NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION

Annual membership is Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 each year. Dues are \$36.00 per year for individual or individual & spouse. Membership allows you to participate in all club activities, vote at the monthly meetings, and includes a subscription to the club newsletter.

Newsletters are available by e-mail for members, subscribers, and interested recipients. Send your e-mail address to [n5do at sbcglobal.net](mailto:n5do@sbcglobal.net) to be put on the list.

ABOUT THE BBARC

Founded December 17, 1974

ARRL affiliate since 1986

The BBARC is a 501(C)3 organization. Contributions are tax deductible.

Big Bend Emergency Net, 3.922 MHz

Founded September 18, 1977

Meets every Sunday morning at 8:30 A.M. CST/CDT

Controlled net format. Welcomes new participants and visitors.

Established by Bob Ward, WA5ROE

Net Manager, Bob Ward, WA5ROE, [wa5roe at juno.com](http://wa5roe.juno.com)

Big Bend 2-meter Net

Founded July 9, 2008

Meets every Wednesday evening at 8:00 P.M. CST/CDT

Controlled net format. Welcomes new participants and visitors.

Established by Bob Ayer, KA1AAJ (SK)

Net Manager, Chuck Dobbins, KA5PVB, [ka5pvb at yahoo.com](http://ka5pvb.yahoo.com)

BBARC REPEATER SYSTEM

All standard offsets. All repeaters require 146.2 Hz

PL tone encoded on your transmit signal. All repeaters are linked.

147.120+	Shafter, Cibolo Creek
147.020+	Elephant Mt. south of Alpine. System hub
146.620-	Ft. Davis located at McDonald Observatory
146.720-	Alpine, Twin Sisters Peaks
146.820-	Terlingua
146.920-	Glass Mountains, Alpine / Ft. Stockton
145.230-	Emergency Repeater

BBARC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November 11, 2014, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.

BBARC MEETING, West Texas National Bank Building

Program: W5ATO, "Communications Operations Plan for the Big Bend Ultra 50 mile run."

December 9, 2014, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. (tentative)

Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the

Big Bend Amateur Radio Club

Details forthcoming