

WGARS

Spring 2018 Fox Hunt

May 12, 2018 – Carrollton, GA

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On Saturday, May 12th the West Georgia Amateur Radio Society (WGARS) held its spring 2018 fox hunt in Carroll County. The WGARS club puts on several fox hunts a year. A “fox hunt” is a scavenger hunt in which individuals and/or teams try to locate a hidden radio transmitter.

In preparation for the event, WGARS had a tape-measure Yagi antenna building session during their club meeting on Tuesday, May 8, 2018, 7:00 p.m. at the Carroll County government complex. As many fox hunters know, the venerable tape measure Yagi is both fun & inexpensive to build, yet very effective and durable in finding a radio signal from afar.



Wayne Hitch, KM4BYH helping WGARS members build antennas at the club meeting.

The fox hunt was publicized on the WGARS website (<http://www.wgars.com>) and their Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/WGARS/>), but as is often the case, we found out about it word-of-mouth from a local friend in the Fayette County Amateur Radio Club (<http://kk4gq.org>) via John Snellen, AI4RT.

On the day of the hunt, participants met in downtown Carrollton at the Courthouse Café, 9 a.m. for breakfast, fellowship, and a pre-event meeting. Here are some hungry hams and their families enjoying time together before the hunt.



For those of you who know me personally, I enjoy field operations so the chance to do the fox hunt sounded like fun. Mrs. D (KI4HHI) and I decided to get to Carrollton early, run the Carrollton Greenbelt (yes, us runners have to get in our training) and then join in the fox hunt when it officially started at 10 a.m.



KI4HHI and I greet the day by running the entire Carrollton Greenbelt before the fox hunt.

The fox hunt started at 10 a.m. The main contingent of fox hunters started the hunt in downtown Carrollton, while KI4HHI & I awaited instructions on the 146.680 W4FWD repeater east of town at the Visitors Center. Instructions were given that the fox was located within Carroll County and that it was broadcasting on 146.580 MHz using 1 watt of power.

I'll be the first to admit that KI4HHI and I are relatively new to fox hunting. We had only done one other fox hunt prior to this one – the Alford Memorial Radio Club hunt in April. The basic gist is this – use a directional antenna, like the tape measure Yagi, to take bearings to

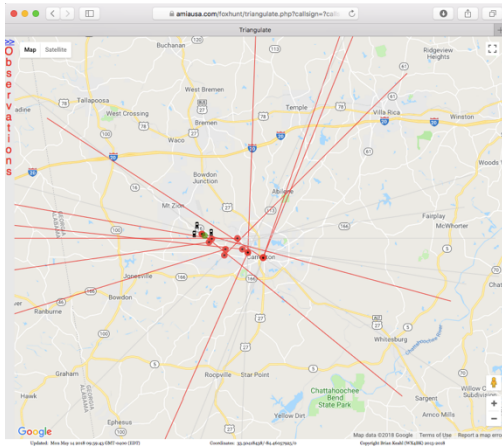
the strongest signal. Once a signal is triangulated to an approximate position, use an attenuator (or block the signal with your body) to pinpoint the exact location. You can learn more about fox hunting at <http://www.homingin.com>. Some fox hunts require driving (like this one) and others use weak transmitters that can be done totally on foot.



Mary Catherine Domaleski (KI4HHI) takes a reading northeast of Carrollton, using our tape measure Yagi attached to a Kenwood TH-D74. We stayed in contact with our team captain AI4RT using 146.535 MHz simplex to share bearings.

One of the things that made this particular fox hunt unique, is that club member Brian Keahl (WX4BK) developed a web application using Google Maps to allow teams to submit their

bearings to the fox. You can view the web app at <http://wx4bk.com/foxhunt> (answer “Yes” when the browser asks if it can use your current location). The app worked great, but the data entered by hunters maybe not so great. One word of caution, as you can see from the picture below many of the readings are not correct – so user beware! Fox hunters were not obligated to use the group data.



Here's a screenshot of what Brian's web application looks like from a browser.

The first person to find the fox was Jason Kitchens, KV4TE. He found it in 40 minutes.



Jason Kitchens KV4TE was first to find the fox.

The fox was located behind the baseball field at Mt. Zion Elementary School, in a northwest direction from downtown Carrollton. Immediately after Jason found the fox, John Playford (WD8LQT) and Brian Keahl (WX4BK) were the second to find it. Even though John helped organize the event, he did not hide the fox which gave him the opportunity to participate.



L-R, John Playford (WD8LQT), Jason Kitchens (KV4TE) behind the fence, and Brian Keahl (WX4BK). The first and second place teams.

Although there was no time limit on finding the fox, "hints" started to be aired on the informal net being conducted on the 146.680 repeater. Shortly after 11:15 a.m. someone mentioned "Beulah Church Road" as a location where the fox could be heard strongly. So much for my false reading to head north!

As more teams started to head west and northwest, the web map of bearings started to show more accurate data. We stayed in contact with AI4RT as we headed to the general direction of John Tanner State Park. Someone eventually leaked that "Mt. Zion Elementary School" was the probable location.

Just knowing the general area of the fox, doesn't mean it's easy to find. Close-in radio direction finding requires different skills and equipment. We met up with our team captain AI4RT and several other teams at the school. The consensus was that the fox was probably located in the wood line and not out in the open. Using John's loop antenna and attenuator, the assemblage of teams headed in the direction of the baseball field. Half of us walked one way around the ball field and the other around the other side – sure enough, the fox was located in center field. Each team was instructed to take a numbered piece of paper and call that into the event net. We were #8.



Team Fayette – John Snellen (AI4RT), Mary Catherine Domaleski (KI4HHI), and Joe Domaleski (KI4ASK) were the 8th team to find the fox. At least we weren't last!

After finding the fox, we met up with other hunters and event organizers at nearby Eureka Church for an “eyeball QSO.” The event net control was located here. I took the time to talk with the event organizers and thank them for the great event.



Post-event “eyeball QSO” in progress at Eureka Church in West Carrollton.



Event organizers – John Playford (WD8LQT), WGARS Secretary Brian Veal (KM4UPX), and Brian's daughter Paige Veal (KN4GHU). Brian and Paige hid the fox!

Thank you WGARS for a great event. We're looking forward to the next one! 73 de KI4ASK