



Jammin' and Hammin' with the Scouts

Join Scouts worldwide for the 56th Jamboree-on-the-Air and during the 2013 National Scout Jamboree.

Jim Wilson, K5ND

Many Amateur Radio operators credit their interest in ham radio to an early exposure through Scouting activities. For some, it was an encounter with ham radio at a pack or troop meeting, a Camporee or perhaps through attending a Jamboree-on-the-Air event. For others, it was working on the Radio Merit Badge as part of their journey toward Star, Life and Eagle Scout ranks (see Figure 1).

That early encounter with ham radio might have sparked an immediate response in many Scouts, which might have included getting their license and continuing in the hobby. On the other hand, it might have remained dormant until sometime later in life when it emerged as a great way to enjoy communicating with other ham radio operators and working with technology. In many cases, it all began with a Jamboree.

Jamboree-on-the-Air

Jamboree-on-the-Air (JOTA) is an annual event, held the third weekend of October, which fosters Scout-to-Scout communication across borders — city, county, state or country, or even between continents. JOTA is not a contest. Its purpose is to foster conversations, rather than multiple contacts. It is a way to get Scouts everywhere on the air simultaneously to communicate with other Scouts and learn about their Scouting experience wherever they live. While learning about each other, it also introduces them to the fun and technology of Amateur Radio.

JOTA is the largest Scouting event in the world. In 2011, the World Organization of

the Scout Movement (based in Geneva, Switzerland) reported that nearly 750,000 Scouts participated from more than 6000 stations in operation from 150 countries. As of this writing, it is too early to report the 2012 World Organization numbers, but the USA numbers show a staggering increase in participation.

In early 2012, the Boy Scouts of America's National Radio Scouting Committee took on a number of improvement projects. Those projects included several new supporting resources, such as updated frequency listings, as well as an extensive promotional campaign across a number of media outlets to reach Scouting volunteers, Scouting professionals and Amateur Radio operators.

In addition, Icom America stepped up to promote JOTA as a part of its sponsorship agreement with the BSA providing stations for JOTA and other Scouting events, including the 2013 National Scout Jamboree (see Figure 2) through 2015. Icom loaned stations to local councils, with five stations in action for Jamboree-on-the-Air. You can see all this and more at www.scouting.org/jota.

All that effort resulted in a 200 percent growth in the number of stations reporting their activities, along with a nearly 500 percent increase in the number of reported Scout participants (see Table 1). Stations reported on their events from 136 Scout councils and 41 states.

The station reports documented 1011 Amateur Radio operators involved across 434 stations. Contacts with all 50 states along with 66 countries were reported.

National Scout Jamboree

K2BSA has been in action at every national Scout Jamboree since 1977. However, Amateur Radio has been present since at



Figure 1 — Jamboree-on-the-Air is the largest Scouting event in the world, with nearly 750,000 Scouts participating from more than 6000 stations across 150 countries. Here is a Scout on the air from K2TD during the 2012 Jamboree-on-the-Air. Equipment was obtained through the Icom America equipment loan program.

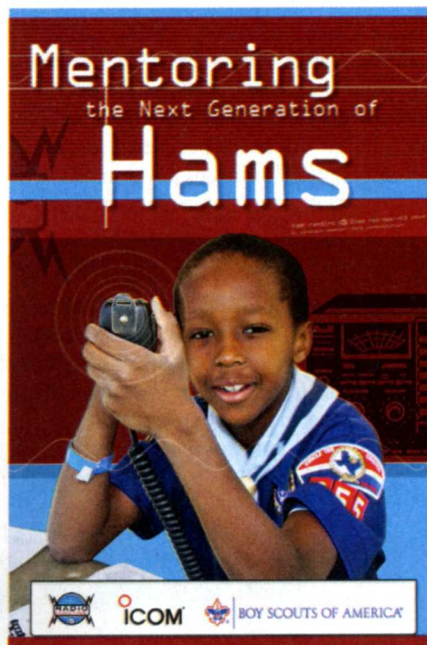


Figure 2 — Icom America promoted Jamboree-on-the-Air through posters and advertisements such as this one.

Table 1
USA JOTA Participation Growth, 2010-2012

	2010	2011	2012	Percentage Change 2011 to 2012
Stations	31	68	204	200%
Scouts	454	3,185	18,537	482%

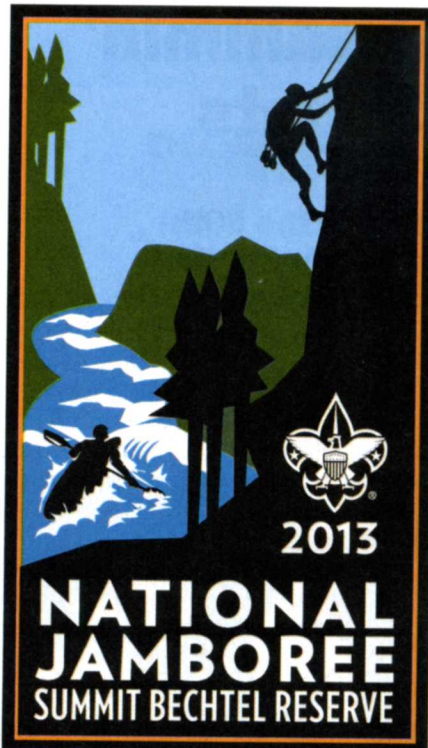


Figure 3 — The 2013 National Scout Jamboree will be on the air via K2BSA July 15-24, 2013, introducing Scouts to Amateur Radio.

least 1953, when K6BSA was in operation from Irvine, California. Jamborees are held every 4 years. Scouting estimates that roughly 50,000 Scouts have experienced Amateur Radio over the subsequent 15 events.

The 2013 National Scout Jamboree (see Figure 3) will be held at Scouting's newest national high-adventure base, the Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve in West Virginia. The exciting news is that the Summit will be the permanent home of the Jamboree. This means any Amateur Radio infrastructure put in place can benefit all Scouting programs held at the Summit, as well as future Jamborees.

Icom America (www.icomamerica.com), through its sponsorship of Radio Scouting, will provide a permanent installation of three repeaters on the property, serving not only the Jamboree and all programs at the Summit, but also the local community. Icom

America is also providing all HF/VHF/UHF Amateur Radio transceivers for the Jamboree operation as the exclusive Amateur Radio transceiver sponsor of the 2013 National Scout Jamboree.

The Jamboree opens on July 15, 2013 and closes on July 24. Over that time, approximately 40,000 Scouts and leaders will be engaged in many high adventure activities including mountain biking, technical rock climbing, zip lines and whitewater rafting. In addition, they will have many opportunities to experience Amateur Radio for the first time, or if they are licensed, to bring along their handheld unit to keep in touch via repeaters. The primary K2BSA activity will be the demonstration station, where Scouts will engage in SSB and PSK31 communication. The operation will also provide Radio Merit Badge training and Amateur Radio Direction Finding (ARDF) events, a perfect outdoor activity for the high adventure focus of the Jamboree. You can see the full operations plan at www.k2bsa.net/2013-plan.

All in all, the 2013 National Scout Jamboree will be a fantastic Amateur Radio experience. You're encouraged to visit if you're in the West Virginia area or to get on the air and help with all those Scouting contacts!

Radio Scouting Update

Perhaps your introduction to Amateur Radio was through working on the Radio Merit Badge. You'll be pleased to note that Scouts earned more than 6000 Radio Merit Badges in 2011. This number has grown steadily since the early 1980s, when fewer than 1000 Scouts earned the badge each year.

In 2012, the Boy Scouts of America introduced two new Amateur Radio-related badges: the Morse Code Interpreter Strip and the Amateur Radio Operator Rating Strip (see Figure 4). An interpreter strip denotes proficiency in a language and availability for communication. The new strip features the word M-O-R-S-E spelled out in code. In its first year of availability, it has become the second highest selling interpreter strip! You

can find the requirements at www.k2bsa.net/morse-code.

The Amateur Radio Operator Rating Strip recognizes the Scouting member's availability as an Amateur Radio operator for communication services at events and activities as well as emergencies. All registered youth members and adult leaders who hold any valid Amateur Radio license issued by the Federal Communications Commission are eligible to wear the rating strip. More information can be found at www.k2bsa.net/operator-rating.

Getting Involved

Amateur Radio and Scouting have grown together since 1918 when the first Wireless Merit Badge was introduced. That original Wireless Merit Badge has evolved into today's Radio Merit Badge. Jamboree and Amateur Radio have gone together since the 1953 National Scout Jamboree and the first Jamboree-on-the-Air in 1957. The fantastic growth in participation shown in JOTA in 2012 proves Amateur Radio remains a fascinating topic for Scouts.

If you're involved in Radio Scouting in your local community, thank you for all you've done to support introducing Amateur Radio to youth. If you're not involved, what are you waiting for? Check with your local radio club and see if they're connected to Scouting. If they are, please get involved. If not, locate your local BSA council at

beascout.scouting.org

to learn how to get involved. You can set up a JOTA station at a local Camporee in October, volunteer as a Radio Merit Badge counselor or get on the air in July to hand out contacts and conversation to the Scouts oper-

ating K2BSA at the National Scout Jamboree. It's a great time to introduce youth to the fun and adventure of Amateur Radio.

All that effort resulted in a 200 percent growth in the number of stations reporting their activities, along with a nearly 500 percent increase in the number of reported Scout participants.

Photos courtesy Boy Scouts of America.

Jim Wilson, K5ND, an ARRL® member, works as director of communication services for the Boy Scouts of America. His volunteer role is chairman of the National Radio Scouting Committee. He publishes a weblog titled "My Radio Adventures" at www.k5nd.net. Jim can be reached at 2605 Valleywood Dr, Grapevine, TX 76051-6584, jim.wilson@scouting.org.



Figure 4 — The Amateur Radio Operator Rating Strip was introduced in 2012 and is available to all registered youth members and adult leaders who hold any valid Amateur Radio license.

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