Practice Fox Hunt for EARS Members

On Saturday, November 20, members of the Ellijay Amateur Radio Society (E.A.R.S.) participated in an Amateur Radio Direction Finding exercise. Those hunting for the fox (the hounds) were Jamie Myers (W4BZZ), Rick Bennett (N4FXZ), Darrell Wells (KN4TQQ), Randy Russo (KK4NEJ) and Kirk Kirchgasler (KK5USA). The fox was hidden by club Treasurer, Jody Huneycutt (K4EPH).

Fox Hunting or Amateur Radio Direction Finding is an event wherein a low power radio transmitter is hidden somewhere in the local area and the hounds, using special antennas designed to indicate the direction from which the radio signal is coming, use maps of the area and by taking directional readings, from several locations, triangulate the location of the fox.

These antennas are usually handheld devices, some made from short pieces of PVC pipe and strips of old metal measuring tapes, assembled in the correct configuration so that they act as antennas on the specific frequencies of the radio waves transmitted by the fox. The fox used on Saturday was a small handheld “walkie talkie” costing about $40, placed in an old metal ammunition box, with the transmit antenna connected to the outside of the box, and hidden in an out-of-the-way location, to make it more difficult to find.

Saturday’s exercise was the first time most of the “hounds” had tried a fox hunt, and due to their lack of experience in using their antennas for direction finding, and maybe due to some of the terrain features between them and the fox, none of the hounds found their way to the fox in the 60 minute time period given for the exercise.

At the start of the exercise, Huneycutt gave the hounds 3 clues to the location of the fox - 1) It was located within a 4 mile radius of the downtown roundabout; 2) It was on publicly-owned land and 3) It was less than 25 feet off of a paved area. The hounds started their search from the high elevation of a large parking lot south of town, about 2 miles from the round-about. The fox was located on a hilltop about ¼ mile southwest of the County Courthouse. Kirchgasler and Bennett were the closest to finding the fox when their time ran out.

EARS will have their next Fox Hunt on Saturday December 4, and if interest remains high, will thereafter, have one each quarter of 2022. Anyone interested in fox hunting or other aspects of amateur (ham) radio can find out how to participate by contacting the club at jodyhuneycutt@gmail.com or calling or texting 770-312-5995..