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Stuff that matters to Wayne

Echolink for Amateur Radio: Why is it still the best kept secret?

Posted on August 18,2013 by Wayne Taylor

I'll admit that I've been a weekend warrior ham man for too many years. I'm definitely not the guy to have the right to complain about anything based on my participation in the community. That said, my name is VE7CAK and I'm back. And I'm here to stay - God willing and the creek don't rise. Special thanks to VA7OBI for re-igniting my airwaves and for the folks who set up the Burnaby 147.060 repeater with the kick (!_!) coverage. Echolink has always been mysteriously well hidden - even in the midst of ham-sters. I'm not sure why but here are my guesses:

- Real radio men believe internet-connected radios are for sissies. I partially agree. If you can't do it with your own radio and antennas then you are relying on some ISP (Internet Service Provider)
- Club members who pay for the hardware and service don't want outsiders to figure out how to use their gear (highly unlikely)
- The Echolink material was written for the people who set up and maintain the node, not for the end user. They just have to figure it out (quite likely).
- The likelihood of someone using a radio to connect to the Echolink node using DTMF tones versus those who will connect with an app on their smart phone are far less so all energy and instructions are focused on the appy people.
- The original software was designed for the ever-proprietary Windows OS only so you are dealing with people who don't know how to think for themselves, let alone help others think. If it was designed for Ubuntu there would probably be a feature length instructional video by now and it would be integrated in the operating system (That was just a mini-rant).

Regardless, we need to pull together as real radio men (and women, and children) and make this Echolink thing more approachable so we can start connecting more. The following are the areas that I realized are missing or lacking in Echolink. I will post the results of my research right after I summarize the points and hopefully this can remain a 'live document' so I can update it as I learn more:

1. A super clear tutorial about how to connect from your radio (ie. mobile in your car) to the Echolink node, and then off to wherever you want to chat in the world.
2. There is no Echolink software in the Ubuntu Software Center. I wish I could program!
3. There is no place, it seems, where you can go for a language translation of amateur radio terminology. I thought I would try to connect to a South Korean Echolink node and realized I didn't know how to say "VE7CAK monitoring" in Korean. I could speak a basic conversation but I didn't have this kind of terminology. This probably wasn't relevant at all ten years ago but Echolink has literally revolutionized the possibilities. Here is a quote from their site:

There are more than 200,000 validated users worldwide — in 151 of the world's 193 nations — with about 5,200 online at any given time.

4. Within the Android Echolink app, the nodes don't display their node numbers! This is kind of amazing to me. I *must* be wrong....

Here is the evolving and improving document as I [hope to] find solutions to these challenges:

1. A super clear tutorial about how to connect from your radio (ie. mobile in your car) to the Echolink node, and then off to wherever you want to chat in the world

I thankfully found a snippet of a post from [this forum](#) which seems to answer my question. I haven't had a chance to make it work yet but I hope to do so soon:

KE7VLC

10-06-2010, 06:39 PM

hey all, this might be a dumb question, but do you need a computer to use echolink on the radio? if not, how do you use it?thanks guysTo use Echolink you need one of two things. Either a radio that you are able to connect to a repeater that has Echolink capabilities.....or a computer.You can use an HT or a mobile radio that has a DTMF pad to connect to a repeater....if it has the capabilities of connecting to the internet and has an Echolink node. All you need to have is the node number of the other repeater or station you want to connect to. For example driving down the highway the one repeater you can reach has the capability, all you would have to do is key up and keep holding it down while you are punching in the DTMF (the repeater owner should advertise this but if you can't find it then you will have to ask around) that keys up the Echolink program connected to it then punch in the node number and let off the key. The repeater should announce that it has connected. Then you transmit just like any normal QSO on a repeater. Once done with the ragchew just follow the directions to drop the node. Make sure you ask if anyone is using the repeater first and wait a min or so for a response....if not then announce that you are trying to activate Echolink and proceed. Once you are finished let everyone know that you are done using the repeater. It's really close to the same procedure for a phone patch.If you don't have a mobile radio or an HT OR a repeater in the area that has a Echolink sysop then you will have to use a computer. Echolink requires an internet connection so it's obvious why someone wouldn't want to set one up....especially if there is no internet connection near the repeater.Hope this helps.

2. There is no Echolink software in the Ubuntu Software Center. I wish I could program!

A pathetic workaround solution is to use a virtual box, install windows in that, and then install Echolink there. This is annoying because you need the virtual box running every time you want to monitor repeaters which could be every time you turn on your computer. Alternatively you could use Wine and install it. I'm sure I saw some tutorials about that around the internet.

3. There is no place, it seems, where you can go for a language translation of amateur radio terminology. I thought I would try to connect to a South Korean Echolink node and realized I didn't know how to say "VE7CAK monitoring" in Korean. I could speak a basic conversation but I didn't have this kind of terminology. This probably wasn't relevant at all ten years ago but Echolink has literally revolutionized the possibilities. Here is a quote from their site:

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I was really surprised about this one. I searched pretty high and pretty low for Korean. There are 55 nodes in South Korea so I figured there *must* be some document with relevant ham words in Korean and English but I was mistaken. I will attempt to first search for it from the Korean side, failing that, I will build the document over time. I'm sure other languages have the same issue so it might be nice to team up on the English vocabulary 'master list' and then just translate that to other languages.

4. Within the Android Echolink app, the nodes don't display their node numbers! This is kind of amazing to me. I *must* be wrong....

For now, you can go to this web page and use the control+F feature to search out repeaters and locations: <http://www.echolink.org/logins.jsp> It's also very good for you to know about [this link](#) where you can search for the closest Echolink-enabled repeaters in your part of the world. Just click the last radio dial that says 'show links near' and enter in your information. Pretty great resource. You can now

reference all this information back to your Echolink smartphone app. It's ridiculous that you can't just get all these deets from the node in the app.... but...

****Update 1:** If you happen to live in BC, [click this link to see all the Echolink nodes in the province](#). Click the frequency to see all the details related to that repeater, for example, how to turn Echolink on or off - I suppose.

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