

2024 WINTER FIELD DAY ACTIVITIES BY THE YORK COUNTY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB – W1YCA

The York County Amateur Radio Club (YCARC) participated in the 2024 Winter Field Day that took place on January 27 & 28, 2024. But the story of the club's participation in this annual event actually began in 2022.



At one of the late fall 2022 meetings of the YCARC, there was a discussion concerning the club's participation in January's 2023 Winter Field Day event. Although there was excitement about an opportunity to 'play radio', there was also a pretty unanimous agreement that club members didn't want to operate outside in the cold. The alternative, of course, was to operate indoors; however, at that time, no indoor facility was available to the club for such an undertaking, and no club member was able to volunteer their home QTH for the event.

Now we fast forward to the late fall of 2023. Thoughts of Winter Field Day operations for the YCARC still lingered in the mind of club president Rick Alderette, KB1ASM. So, on his own, he went on a search for a facility the club might be able to use for 2024 Winter Field Day operations. During Rick's search, he quite by accident came upon the Buxton/Hollis Rod and Gun Club facilities. Having no luck in finding a facility to that point, and just about giving up hope, Rick stopped in the Rod and Gun Club to see if they would host the YCARC for radio operations for a couple of days in January. He contacted the Rod and Gun Club's Public Information Officer, Sarah Nash, and found out she was an amateur radio operator assigned call sign KC1JFK. Maybe there is a HAM god after all! Rick explained the YCARC's wishes for Winter Field Day as well as the purpose of the event. The Rod and Gun Club approved Rick's proposal, and at no cost to the YCARC!

The Buxton/Hollis Rod and Gun Club started in 1936 as the Buxton & Hollis Skeet & Rifle Club. Throughout the 40's, 50's, and 60's, the Club diligently served the local community by raising trout and stocking local areas ponds, as well as organizing and hosting several public-facing events. Continuing to serve the outdoor community throughout the 80's, the Club hosted several hunter safety classes, fly tying classes, trap shoots, black powder shoots, and participated in numerous county fairs. Because of the Club's dedicated focus on community service, it was deemed by the IRS to be a tax exempt "public charity" in April of 2016. Today, nearly 400 members strong, the Buxton & Hollis Rod & Gun Club continues to champion the growth of safe, sustainable, and fulfilling outdoor activities throughout the

State of Maine. The Club hosts several organized events for both recreational and charity purposes including an annual breast cancer awareness shoot, American Rimfire Association matches, International Defensive Pistol Association matches, and an annual youth ice fishing event on Deer Pond, to name a few. For more information please go to [Buxton Hollis Rod and Gun Club \(buxtonhollisrodgunclub.org\)](http://buxtonhollisrodgunclub.org).



Now that the YCARC had a place to operate, it was necessary to coordinate all the logistics needed for remote operations – set-up, transceivers, antennas, other equipment, operators and their availability, tear-down, and most importantly – food! Roger Pience, N1XP took on this laborious and thankless job with tireless enthusiasm, as well as the specific task of ensuring we would all be fed. A few weeks prior to the event, several club members including Rick, and Roger, as well as Tony Baker, AA3HD, and Rob Sylvester, AA1BS, went to the Rod and Gun Club to check out the facility. All were quite impressed with the roomy, two-floor heated building. A full kitchen and lavatory accommodations also were available for our use. This was going to be luxurious radio operating conditions...relatively speaking...we wouldn't be out in the cold...except to set up our antennas, and there was sufficient property outside to do that too.

Winter Field Day 2024 took place from 2:00 pm local time Saturday 27 January through 2:00 pm local time Sunday 28 January. At 11:00 am Saturday various club members arrived at the Rod and Gun Club to start setting up operations. Radios and all the associated gear had to be unloaded and arranged, and antennas had to be erected. Operating positions were determined and set up after furniture was re-arranged. In addition to YCARC members doing the set up operations, Sarah, and her father Steve, (also an amateur radio operator – call sign KC1FHU – and Rod and Gun Club member), assisted as well. Steve was our point of contact at the Rod and Gun Club. By about 1:00 pm or so, we were pretty well ready for operations, and ready to eat! Roger had arranged for us to have pizza and other club members had brought various sweets and snacks.



We started calling “CQ Winter Field Day” promptly at 2:00 pm Saturday using the call sign W1YCA – the YCARC call sign. We were classified as *3i Maine*, (three transmitters, operating from Maine.) We operated on all the allowed HF bands, and had an HT tuned to VHF. Our antennas consisted of two different wires and a vertical. Our HF transceivers each put out 100 watts max. At supper time, Roger had arranged for us to have cheesy pasta and sauce with garlic bread...mmm. A couple of different cakes and homemade chocolate chip cookies had been brought in to support the ‘troops’ too...all delicious. We operated continuously until about 12:30 am Sunday morning. Most everyone had gone home by that time, but Rick and Tony stayed overnight, sleeping on a cot and folding bed that they brought. At 5:30 am Sunday, Tony was back up again calling “CQ Winter Field Day.” By 7-ish, Roger was back in the kitchen preparing breakfast sandwiches for the now larger group that was back at the Rod and Gun Club. Over the 24-hour event, a total of 12 YCARC members participated, and six guests attended. Club member radio operators included Rick, Rob, Tony, Jack Brennan (K1NKS), Bruce Washburn (KC1RUJ), and guest Monique Miller (KC1RGX.) Several of the guests indicated they would be joining the club. Corn Chowder and bread were on the menu for lunch and kept the now somewhat exhausted radio operators fueled up for the final push to 2:00pm. Whether there to act as a radio operator, be part of the set-up/tear-down crew, or attending to provide moral support and/or to socialize, all YCARC members who participated had a great time.



Following the cessation of radio operations at 2:00 pm Sunday, those remaining at the Rod and Gun Club had to put everything back the way it was at 11:00 am the day before. Antennas had to be taken down, radios and equipment had to be put away, the kitchen had to be cleaned up, and furniture had to be put back into place. All was done in an efficient, timely, and orderly manner, with Steve from the Rod and Gun Club once again assisting. People were on their way home just as a bit of mixed frozen participation started to fall.

But this is not the end of the story. Due to some unforeseen 'technical difficulties' during Winter Field Day operations, the YCARC was not able to enter their QSO's on a computer logging program at the time of the contacts. Instead, all contacts were logged on paper logs. Roger stepped up to convert all the paper log entries into the Cabrillo format accepted by the 2024 Winter Field Day officials, another thankless job he eagerly took on. Roger determined that we made a total of 595 contacts. Of these, 42 turned out to be 'dupes,' with our final total being 553 contacts. During our operations we contacted 41 different states, and six different countries. When the logs were finally submitted to the Winter Field

Day Committee, the YCARC was designated as logging 549 contacts. Not bad for the first time the YCARC had participated in Winter Field Day. Till next year!!

For those interested in the YCARC and their activities, as well as possibly wanting to join the group, please see our web page at: www.w1yca.org

73 – Tony – AA3HD

