



The Portlight

[The Northern Star Hunter Sailing Association](#)



Commodore's Corner – March 2015

Spring is upon us and many of you are working on your boats to get them ready for launch. I am looking forward to many months without snow and shoveling! If I could only convince Linda to head for the islands for the winter... In any case, the new season is upon us and NSHSA has several events scheduled already. If the USCG lifts their ban on sailing north of the Bay Bridge before 4/15, the Splash Down Raft will be held on Worton on April 4th. To start May, Paisano will be hosting the Kentucky Derby Raft on the Bodkin. We have a few cruises on the books for 2015 too. Champagne will be heading south starting Memorial Day weekend, along with a planned overnight to Solomons in May or June and Silent Running's annual Fall Cruise. Please check out the [schedule on the website](#) for the most up to date list of activities! There are still opportunities to host or help to organize an event this season. If you have an idea for a raft up, please let us know.

At the Spring Meeting, the vote to amend the bylaws was passed with a unanimous vote of those present and submitted proxies. The changes allow for more flexibility in scheduling the end of season dinner, publishing the newsletter, and provide the option to vote electronically. Thank you to all that helped to make these changes possible.

Plans are underway to have another Hunter Rendezvous next summer. Earlier this year, a survey was sent out and the results are being reviewed to help decide the time and location for the event. Thank you to all that responded. Committees are being formed now to help organize the event. If you would like to help, please let us know. The more people that help, the less work and more fun there is for everyone.

We have received another order of the NSHSA cozies to aid in our recruiting efforts. Please let me know if you need some additional cozies and flyers to give to Hunter owners in your marina. I think that we are a fun group that they would enjoy being part of (not that I am biased...)

I hope to see everyone on the Bay in the next several weeks.

Bill

Vice- Commodore

Farewell to winter

The week of extremely cold sub-freezing weather during February caused the Coast Guard to close the western portion of the C and D Canal and the Chesapeake Bay north of the Bay Bridge, (except for the Patapsco River), to most boat traffic beginning on February 17. Only steel hulled commercial ships were permitted to travel those areas while Coast Guard cutters attempted to break up the ice. The restrictions were broadcast on VHF Channel 22A five times daily as the ice grew to nearly 12 inches thick in some places.

On February 21 ninety percent of the bay was covered in ice and Tangier Island was cut off from getting supplies because the ferry could not get through. The Coast Guard had to deliver supplies to the island by helicopter. Reports said this was the coldest winter in the past 30 years.



On our way to the Spring Planning Meeting on March 14 we travelled over the Bay Bridge in very dense fog, and were only able to see the ice near the shoreline at the foot of the bridge. Later that day we returned to Rock Hall and visited Elsie's Phantasie. The bubbler system at North Point Marina did an excellent job of keeping the ice away from the docks and the boats. Most of Rock Hall Harbor was still ice covered and the Blue Herons were perched at the edge of the ice waiting hopefully for their next meal to swim by.

The higher temperatures starting on March 11 began melting the ice, and on March 18 the Bay was declared ice free and the ban was lifted. It appears that winter is over now and warmer weather and longer sunny days are ahead to usher in the Spring Sailing Season.

On Another Note:

Boat US announced a recall concerning 4.8 million Kidde fire extinguishers purchased between August 2013 and November 2014. The recall includes Mariner 10, Mariner 110, Mariner 5 and Mariner 5G fire extinguishers. To see if you have one of the recalled fire extinguishers and to arrange for a free replacement go to:

www.cpsc.gov/en/Recalls/2015/Kidde-Recalls-Disposable-Plastic-Fire-Extinguishers.

Fleet Captain

Finally! Spring is here, meaning boating season is almost here and hopefully racing season too! In order to be ready to participate I am asking for those of you who are interested to fill in and sign the "2015 Hunter Races" form available on the NSHSA web page. You can send it back to me by email or print it and give it to me the next time you see me. If you are interested you can read the rules for the "NSHSA RACE - Sailing instructions". Personally, I find them intimidating! The reality is much simpler and a lot of fun, so please try to race at least one time this year.

See you soon, Frederique

2015 HUNTER RACES

COMPETITOR'S NAME: _____

YACHT NAME: _____ HUNTER MODEL: _____ YEAR: _____

JIB SIZE: _____ PROP STYLE: _____ DRAFT: _____

SD Shoal Draft VIS Vision LEG Legend PAS Passage CC Center Cockpit DS Deck
Salon

COMMENTS:

The undersigned agrees that the entrant, the vessel, and the crew entered hereby, will be bound by The Racing Rules of Sailing and by other rules that govern this event. In consideration of being permitted to enter this event, being knowledgeable of the risks of competitive sailing and knowing that it is my sole responsibility to decide whether to enter or to continue any race, I voluntarily assume the risk of participation in this event and release the event organizers and people conducting the event from all liability in connection with any injury or damages that may occur.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Secretary's report

3.17.2015

The Spring Business Meeting was held at Cutter Marina on Saturday, March 14th. Braving the rain and early hour, eleven boats attended the pot luck breakfast. It was great to see a good turnout. Everyone is itching to get back on the water except a certain couple returning from Florida. A tan in Maryland at that time of the year is certainly against the law or at least should be taxed along with the rain!

The Commodore called the meeting to order and informed everyone of the USCG order to close the northern bay to traffic until April 15th due to ice flows. The USCG may open the bay earlier. Bill informed us that another RENDEZVOUS is in the works!!! The club is looking for volunteers to help plan and organize a 2016 Rendezvous with HSA1. Please send Bill an email with your offer to help!

The vote on amendments to the club's by-laws was passed unanimously with 70.3 percent of our members voting in person or by proxy. Well done! Thanks to all for making this a priority!

Various discussions were held on the 2015 schedule with several members stepping up to coordinate a raft-up or cruise. The club is looking for additional people to organize raft-ups or events. Don't be bashful..."We Need You!"

If you have any pictures and a short paragraph or two, the Spin Sheet is looking for information each month to post in "Club News". By letting other Hunter Owners in on how much fun we have, might encourage them to join our ranks. Please send any information you might have or suggestions to scop@northeastern.com. Information needs to be sent in by the 5th of the month to be included in the following months Spin Sheet. This is a link to their site.. <http://spinsheet.com/> Check out

CRUISING/CLUBS for the latest article about our very own club members... "[Northern Star Hunter Sailing Association Members in the BVI](#)".

Purser

"Happy Spring", and that means dues. Yes, it is that time of year when the members send me their annual dues of \$35.00. But wait, to date 20 boats have already paid and that is wonderful. So only few more to go. If you plan on mailing them please be sure to address the envelope with my name. The folks down here in Pasadena have difficulty finding NSHSA. Thanks.

We keep a tight budget and use our monies for club sponsored events like Memorial Day and Labor Day. The club also reimburses \$50.00 for individual rafts ups. Other areas of expenses are: internet fees, advertising items, and small office supplies.

Need a new burgee? Let me know because I have a few for sale @ \$25.00

Marie Frankel 2008 Kurtz Avenue Pasadena, Maryland 21122

Boating Apps for Cell Phone and Tablet

There's an App for That

In the next few editions of the Portlight I would like to highlight a few cellphone and tablet apps that I have found useful on the water. As some of you know I do not own Apple products. Therefore, the Apps and functions I describe may or may not be available for Apple products.

Don't have AIS on your boat? Don't panic - all is not lost. If you have a cell phone, you might consider the Marine Traffic app. It has a free version which can be downloaded for use on your boat.



From my home I see all the maritime traffic entering the Port of Baltimore and I often wondered what those boats were named and what they were doing. That was until I downloaded "Marine Traffic". This app is based on the AIS system of boat identification which requires that all commercial marine traffic broadcast on the VHF band information pertaining to that ship. Nowadays, AIS has become so popular that many recreational boats are using it. I know that Xtasea, Piasiano, Contigo and Silent Running have it just to name a few. With the Maritime Traffic app you can see relevant information about all the broadcasting boats in your area. Specifically, you can see information about their longitude and latitude, their course and speed, and their length and width as well as their next port. You can even see a picture of the vessel itself.

A screenshot of the Marine Traffic app interface. The top bar shows a green grid icon, a flag of the Bahamas, and the ship name "HEROIC LEADER" in white text on a dark blue background. Below this is a photo of the ship. To the right of the photo, the status is "Underway", speed/course is "0.6kn / 69°", and destination is "US BAL". Below the photo, the ship type is "Vehicles Carrier", length x breadth is "200m x 33m", and draught is "8.1m". To the right of the photo, the ETA is "2015-03-17 16:30 (UTC)", received time is "4 min ago", and the AIS source is "202 K3ARS". On the far right, there is a list of actions: "Show Vessel's Track", "Distance to...", "Itineraries History", "Position History", "Port Calls", and "Nearby Vessels". At the bottom right, there are two buttons: "Add to new Fleet" (blue) and "Vessel's Details" (green with a right arrow).

Nice information to have if you are sailing the Chesapeake. If you would like an enhanced version of this app which would show information all over the world as well as many enhancements you would have to pay a nominal subscription. For more information see:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.marinetraffic.android&hl=en>

As of this date the Marine Traffic app has come out with several new features which provide more frequent updates of AIS data.

The Rule of Twelfths Revisited

It's June 13th and the weather prediction for the weekend is great. You make an early departure and head south for a downwind run down the Bay. Passing the Patapsco River the Chester beckons so you make the turn to Port. Rather than a long motor up the Chester you spot Queenstown Creek. It's been a little while since visiting Queenstown so you decide this would be a great place to visit and spend the afternoon. As you pass G3 and G5 you turn to port and start looking for a place to drop the hook. Your depth sounder is showing a steady 6'-7'.

While looking for that anchor location your progress into the Creek is suddenly, halted with the Admiral giving a very inquisitive look! A glance at the depth sounder now reveals a depth of 4.1' which is a bit skinny for your 5' draft. Despite your best efforts you are hard aground. It's now 10:45AM and a look at the tide table indicates your planning was not ideal. Thoughts for an earlier than expected lunch now comes into play. Apply the 'Rule of Twelfths' and figure what time might you expect to float free and find that ideal anchor location?

Hint - the tidal range is 0.9 ft.

(All correct answers submitted to the editor will qualify to get next month's edition of the Portlight FREE.)

Cruising in the Bahamas

Some of you are considering cruising in the Bahamas. The following is an excellent article by fellow NSHSA member Rex Noel on establishing cell phone communications while you cruise there. It is reprinted with permission from Waterway Guide Magazine.

An Introduction to BTC

Among the many concerns a first time cruiser has in preparing to shove off, communications is an important, but confusing, subject. There are more options than ever to stay in touch and meet your communication needs for weather, research and boat maintenance. Choosing where to spend your precious funds can be difficult. But if, like so many east coast cruisers, your destination is the Bahamas, there is a simple and inexpensive solution that may meet all of your needs.

Bahamas Telecommunications Company, usually know as BaTelCo, or simply BTC, provides both voice and data services that are generally useable throughout the common Bahamas cruising areas. During our first cruise to the

islands, an old cell phone and a new but inexpensive mifi kept us in touch and enabled us to download weather data and even to order replacement equipment when necessary.

The BTC cellular system is based on GSM technology, like AT&T in the US, specifically on the 1900 MHz band. They also have a few CDMA (define?) towers in popular tourist areas, usable if you have a Verizon handset. But unless you like huge roaming fees, don't even think about using your U.S. plan for voice or data.

Instead, take along an unlocked GSM quad band phone. We used an old AT&T flip phone we already owned. Be sure it still has some battery life left and take charging accessories. Or, you can buy an unlocked GSM, four-band phone online. Before leaving we also bought an unlocked mifi device, a data-only wifi hotspot, which connects to the BTC service and provides a wifi signal in your boat. In turn, all of your wifi-equipped laptops, phones, and tablets can connect to the mifi and through it to the internet. These can be purchased through Amazon or other online sources for well under \$100. Again, be sure it is GSM, four band and unlocked.

As soon as you arrive in the Bahamas, take both devices to the nearest BTC office. We checked into Bimini and the folks at the office there were great to work with. It may be best to do this step in one of the larger communities, like Bimini, Nassau or Marsh Harbor. Some of the smaller cays have offices, but may not know the process as well.

You will buy a new BTC SIM card for the phone and for the mifi, each of which will cost about \$15. At the same time, purchase some minutes for the phone. These are denominated in dollars, and \$20 met our limited calling needs for a few months. After purchasing these at the counter, we sat down with a customer service representative who helped activate both devices. While she was doing that, we purchased an initial \$30 data plan for the mifi, providing 2GB of data good for 30 days. BTC has 3G service in most areas and 4G will be available in some areas, particularly the more populated islands. After less than an hour, we walked out of the office with a functioning phone and mifi that served us well for our entire Bahamas circuit.

You will need to take one more step with the mifi. Connect to the BTC website and set up a Top Up account for your mifi, which has a phone number associated with it that you received when you were at the BTC office. Just click on the Top Up link at the top of their home page, then follow the prompts to set up your account. This will allow you to add data to the mifi when needed.

In our case, we used data primarily for email and to download weather GRIB files. We stayed away from most web browsing and generally paid little attention to the online world. After all, that was a big part of why we were out here...Better to be walking a beach or snorkeling than glued to a screen. Within those parameters, the 2GB plan generally lasted us through the 30-day limit.

When you need to add data, use your laptop or other device through the mifi to log into your account on the BTC website. You will be able to access their website even if you have used up your available data. Now add funds to your Top Up account. A quirk of the BTC system is that you can't draw your account down to zero; so if you plan to add \$30 worth of data to your mifi, make sure you add at least \$35 to your Top Up account. You can add more at any time. Complete the transaction and it will bill your credit card.

*Now you need to use the funds you just put in your account to add data to your mifi. But to do this, you need to call BTC by dialing *205#. Of course, you are doing this on a mifi, which can't be dialed like a phone, so what to do? Simply remove the SIM from your phone, and insert the SIM from your mifi into the phone. Dial *205# and follow the prompts to top up your data account. Pick the plan you want; we generally used the 2GB good for 30 days option, but there are smaller options. Now return both SIMs to their rightful places and your mifi should be ready to go again. It sounds tricky, but is simple to do and only takes a few minutes.*

You may need to add more minutes to your phone as well. You will need to set up a second Top Up account on the BTC website specifically for the phone. After that, the process is the same, except you don't need to swap out the SIM cards to make that call.

We found the BTC coverage to be excellent throughout most of the Bahamas, with the exception of a few areas deep in the Exumas Park. This included the length of the Exumas, Long Island, Eleuthera and up through the Abacos. There are towers in almost every major settlement, and with the flat terrain, the signals carry well. But there was that one time, up in Pipe Creek, where we put the mifi in a bucket and hauled it up to the spreaders with a halyard, in order to order the new batteries..... Ahhh, the cruising life.

The BTC phone worked well for both local calls and back to the US. Signals were generally strong and the voice quality was excellent. And our family and friends were surprised how we stayed in close touch via email, all using the BTC network. We rarely found ourselves dragging a laptop ashore searching for internet service. More time for fun was the happy result.