

How do I?

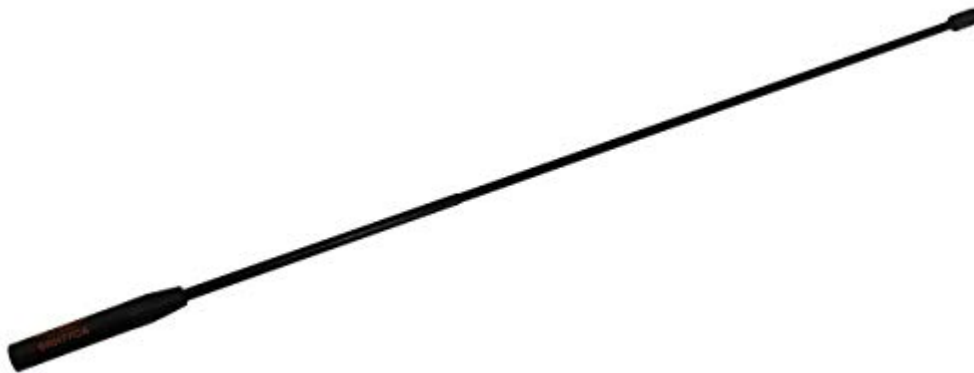
An occasional series

This week:HT Antennas..Beyond the "Rubber Duck"

The first song I can recall really liking when I heard it on the radio as a kid is CW McCall's "Convoy". The opening "Breaker Breaker 19, this here is the Rubber Duck" is a classic. For those who may not know, CW McCall and Chip Davis of Mannheim Steamroller are the same person. But enough of that. We are talking about ham radio, not music or CB radio. Just as the the "Rubber Duck" was almost effective in changing the trucking world, the stock factory rubber duck antenna that comes with your HT works but generally can do so much better.

Some readers may have experience with scanners. The popular HT sized ones sold for use for listening to NASCAR races or railfanning or similar purposes have a really inefficient factory antenna. Why? they need a short length to make them portable, but typically cover frequencies from around 118 MHZ to 900 MHZ. Some cover parts of the 6M and 10M Amateur Bands and the 11M Citizens Band as well. the result is a 30 inch or so coil of wire wrapped and compressed into a 6 inch or so long cylinder.

An HT rubber duck is essentially the same. The one that came with my Yaesu FT60 seemed virtually dead on arrival.



Diamond SR77CA 2m and 70cm HT antenna

When I acquired my first HT I somehow learned of the Diamond brand of antennas. Yes there are cheaper knockoffs, but the Diamond's work for me. I use the SR77 series on all of my HT's. They work well and my Yaesu FT60 with one has become my go to radio for use at public service events such as the Fantastic Parade in Dillsburg, PA the third weekend in October.



MFJ 1730 2m Jpole (to left of speaker in window) with Icom 208H scanning the 160mhz land commercial railroad frequencies.

Another option is a J Pole, such as the MFJ 1730. These are simple antennas and you can easily follow any of the various articles in the ARRL Handbook, or some of the antenna books and QST. A quick Google search brings up articles such as <http://www.hamuniverse.com/slimjim.html>

The common name is "Slim Jim" and there are several commercial models available. The most common are for 2 meters and 70cm, and 6m models are practical. For 10m and up they become really long, really quick. I have one hanging from a curtain rod that I have operated the CARC 2m net from. I have the MFJ version, but again, any commercial version or a home made one will do. The hardest part to making one seems to be finding a short piece of ladder line. You can use 450 ohm (seems to be preferred) or 300 ohm (standard TV ladder line). With the conversion to cable and satellite TV it is becoming harder to walk into and buy short lengths and you may have to buy a roll. If that is the case it may be cheaper to buy a commercial model. One would think kits would be available, but I suspect, especially in the cheaper models, that the parts are a majority of the cost and the savings to do it yourself just isn't there. But if you have the parts and a desire to make your own, it seems to be a simple afternoon project. Note: just about everyone seems to use a BNC connector since that seems to be easiest to solder to ladder line. You will need an adapter to connect the BNC connector to your radio in most cases.



MFJ 1730 2m roll up antenna.
See ya on the air!