



Another route to boosting wireless range is to build your own unit using multiple components, but the project is a far cry from plug-and-play.

## Confessions of a Hacker

*The wide range of wireless options are enough to keep any techno geek on his toes.*

**A**lways in search of bargains, *Practical Sailor* contributor and self-described geek, Mike Slinn ([www.marnav.com](http://www.marnav.com)) has experimented with several different Wi-Fi alternatives aboard his Beneteau First 435.

In 2002, he started with a Yagi unidirectional antenna coupled to his laptop's 802.11b Wi-Fi card. The cannon-shaped antenna was fixed to a winch handle, which was rotated until the signal strength was optimal. Tied up in Ala Wai harbor in Hawaii, he was able to get a good signal from apartment buildings almost 2 miles away.

He is now using a D-Link RangeBooster DWA-142 wireless N adapter (\$30-\$50). This device is an 802.11n transceiver and is compatible with 802.11g. The DWA-142 resembles a hockey puck, plugs into USB, and gives him excellent range, even when connecting to an 802.11g signal. The downside is that it is not user-friendly, and technical support he says, is "a form of medieval torture." Although he hasn't tried it, he suspects the WUSB300N from Linksys ([www.linksys.com](http://www.linksys.com)) would be a good alternative for people who require better tech support.

For the future, Slinn is watching WiMAX, the latest iteration of wireless service that is being rolled out in Baltimore, Md., and is expected to grow.