Abstract ID: H13P-1991

Introducing the OPEnS HUB 2.0

-A Versatile, In situ, Remote, Sensor Hub

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OPEnS — Openly Published Environmental Sensing — Oregon State University, College of Agricultural Sciences, College of Engineering — www.open-sensing.org

ABSTRACT: NEW METHODS OF REMOTE DATA RETRIEVAL

Research in geoscience often requires transmission of significant amounts of data from remote locations. The emergence of microcontrollers and open-source sensors are allowing connectivity to affordable, distributed in-situ monitoring. This report describes the OPEnS Hub, a modular data hub orders of magnitude cheaper than commercial dataloggers when scaled to multiple nodes. The test Hub has achieved consistent transmission up to one fourth of a mile in a densely forested basin and pushed nearly half a million data points from a network of open-source weather stations and soil probes as a real-time stream to Google Sheets. The Hub can process 12 variables from each device, and telemetry options range from LoRa, nRF, GSM, and wired ethernet. The inherently modular nature of the Hub means the user can adapt the transmission protocol to suit the unique context of each deployment.

PURPOSE: DATA AT ANYTIME FROM ANYWHERE

For as long as humans have tried to understand the natural world, they have attempted to take measurements to help deduce something significant about the world around them. Thankfully sensor technology has become cheaper and smaller over the years - enabling scientists to create networks of multitudes of sensors to be distributed in an environment. This would not be feasible to do if a researcher has to physically collect data from each sensor device out in the field. To make a distributed sensor network viable, one needs a way to wirelessly send data to a central hub, which is then saved in different formats (e.g. SD flash and in a spreadsheet online). This not only eliminates the requirement to travel to the field to collect data from each sensor, but online reporting of data can enable the researcher to determine of all devices in operation are working properly without having to physically observe each one.. The implications of such a technology allows researchers and scientists to form new data driven empirical models faster, and more cost efficiently than ever before.

Left Dr Chet Udell and right Tom DeBell running signal strength diagnostics between the transmitter and receiver hub.

Image Depicting the Average GSM traffic across the globe in 2017

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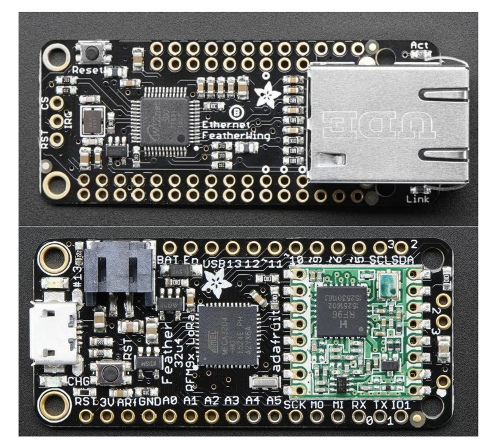
Website/Projects: *(http://www.open-sensing.org/)*

CHECK OUT OUR CODE ON GITHUB: https://tinyurl.com/OPEnSLab

Scan Me to See to Our Project Page!

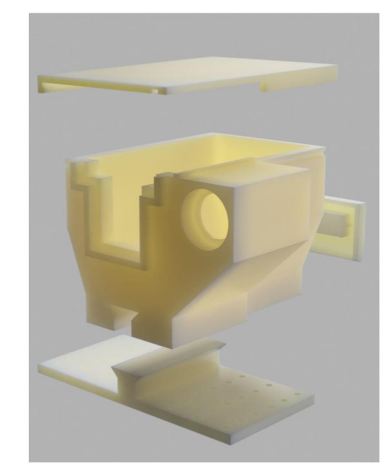
HUB COMPONENT BREAKDOWN

- Adafruit Feather 32u4 LoRa Radio (RFM9x) – Integrated Microcontroller.
- Adafruit Ethernet Featherwing – Ethernet Shield for LAN connectivity.
- Adafruit MicroSD card breakout board+ – Back-up data storage.
- 900Mhz Antenna Kit – Increase radio transmission distance.
- Adafruit Fona GSM module – Cell tower connectivity from remote locations
- Custom 3D Printed enclosure- Weather-proof and modular for future development

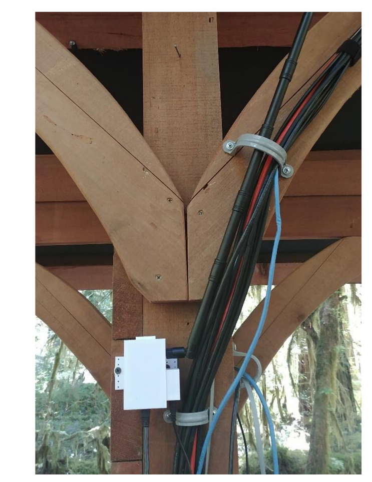


Above, Ethernet Featherwing Below, The 32u4 LoRa Radio

Fona GSM Breakout for most remote locations



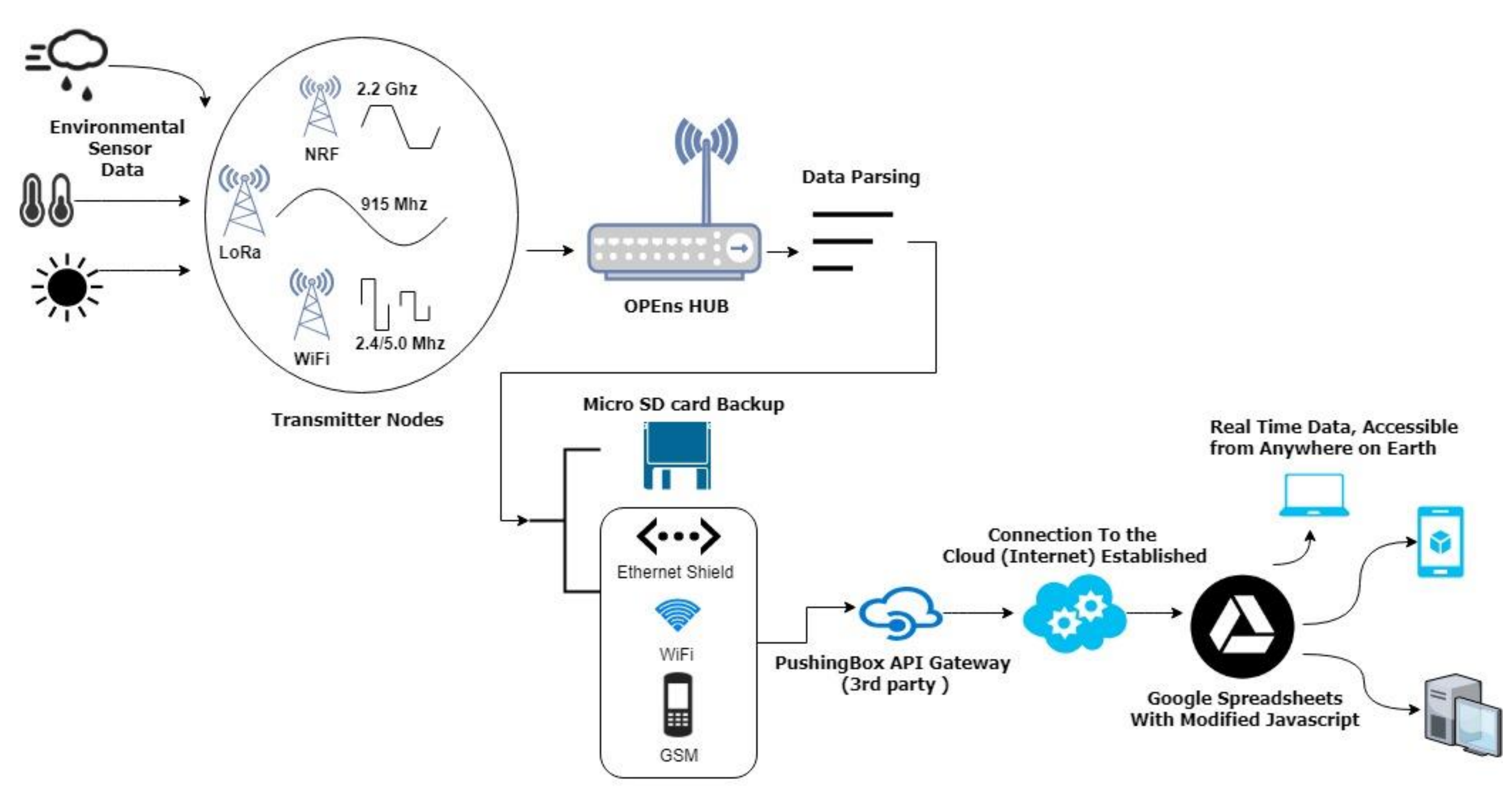
Fusion 360 Rendering of the ABS 3D printed HUB enclosure



Fully assembled receiver hub located in the HJ Andrews Experimental forest.

METHODS: FLOW OF DATA

The largest hurdle to overcome with any remote sensing project is the availability of the data being collected. This approach is unique because instead of having to physically go collect the data or retrieve memory banks at the site of collection the data is dynamically transmitted, compiled and uploaded to a google spreadsheet in 5 minute intervals. In the figure below, a diagram of the transmission protocol is outlined.



The first step in this process was modifying the Google Application script in such a way that it would agree with the comma delimited values that our hub would be parsing. After deploying this new modified spreadsheet, it was necessary to set up a third party Application Programming Interface as a middle man between our HTTP Ethernet transmitted data and the Google compliant HTTPS encrypted data. This handshake protocol was done through a API service called *PushingBox*. This GET/POST service was especially helpful because it allowed very small packets of data to be transmitted through the Ethernet LAN connection as a HTTP request and then compiled, separated and organized all in the cloud instead of on the microprocessors themselves.

TESTING: A MULTI-NODE APPROACH

For this study, two micro-scale weather stations (OPEnS Evaporometers) and three soil moisture probes were connected to a Hub at Lewis Brown Farms in Corvallis, Oregon and five Evaporometers were deployed in the H.J. Andrews Research Forest in Blue River, Oregon.

A Evaporometer Weather Station.

A Wireless Transmitting Soil Moisture probe (Above)
A LoRa Radio Strength "Sniffer" Rover (Below)

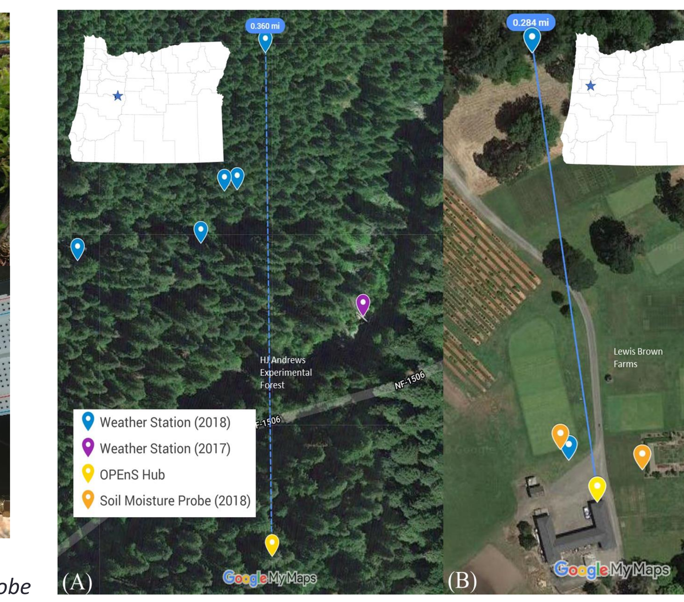


Figure depicting the locations of in-suti sensors relative to the data hub at the HJ Andrews Forest (Left) and Lewis Brown Farms (Right).

RESULTS: DATA RECEIVED

- Reliable Data Transmissions from up to 2km away in heavy wooded conditions for LoRa, and GSM reporting from remote rural sites.
- Nearly 500,000 data points collected over the lifetime of the experiment
- 5 minute update interval gave near "real-time" updates

Design Phase	Location	Device(s)	Time of Deployment	Variables Collected	Collection Interval	Data Points
Field Test 1	HJ Andrews Experimental Forest, Blue River OR	1 Open Source Weather Station	07/24/2017-09/21/2017	Temperature, Humidity, Light Intensity, Change in Mass (Rain)	5 minutes	106,274
Field Test 2	Lewis Brown Farms, Corvallis OR	3 Soil Moisture Devices & 2 Open Source Weather Stations	04/17/2018-08/14/2018	Soil Conductivity, Soil Temperature, Temperature, Humidity, Change in Mass (Rain)	15 minutes	334,961
Field Test 3	HJ Andrews Experimental Forest, Blue River OR	5 Open Source Weather Stations	08/28/2018-9/15/2018	Temperature, Humidity, Albedo, Light Intensity (Full spectrum and IR), Change in Mass (Rain).	8 minutes	41,615
				Total Data Points Collected:		482,850

Summary Table of Field Test Results.

CONCLUSIONS: FUTURE DIRECTION

The need to develop wireless communication and networked data hubs are essential for expanding the viability and functionality of distributed sensor networks. Recent developments on the Norwegian microsatellite NORSAT-2 have proven the ability to transmit LoRa signals to low-orbit satellites, implicating tremendous potential for this remote data logging strategy in the future.

The OPEnS Lab also plans to develop a graphical user interface for the Hub to enable end-use by researchers without any programming experience. This project is at the core of the lab's Internet of Agriculture initiative, aiming to break down technical barriers and put environmental monitoring into the hands of farmers, hobbyists, and beginning researchers. **This technology is currently being utilized by Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana!**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the College of Agricultural Sciences' Beginning and Continuing Researcher Support Program and the Ag Research Foundation. I am especially indebted to Dr. Chet Udell, Director of the OPEnS Lab, senior researcher and assistant professor of Biological & Ecological Engineering for his patience and skilled guidance throughout the entirety of this project. As my teacher and mentor, he has taught me more than I could ever give him credit for here. He has shown me, by his example, what a good scientist (and person) should be.
I am grateful to all of those with whom I have had the pleasure to work during this and other related projects. Each of the members of OPEnS Lab team, Dr. John Selker, Manuel Lopez, Lars Larson and have aided to this project significantly and in my professional development teaching me a great deal about both scientific research and life in general.
Finally, nobody has been more important to me in the pursuit of this project than the members of my family. I would like to thank my parents, whose love and guidance are with me in whatever I pursue. Lastly, I thank my teachers, professors, and peers for helping foster a love for science that has brought me to where I'm now.