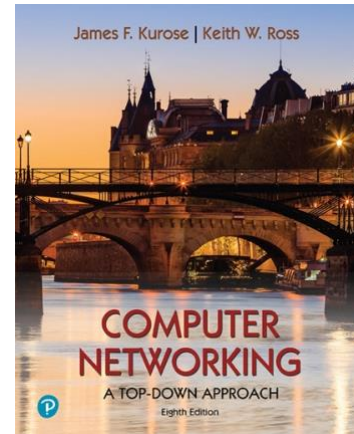


Wireshark Lab: 802.11 WiFi v8.1

Supplement to *Computer Networking: A Top-Down Approach*, 8th ed., J.F. Kurose and K.W. Ross

"Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I understand." Chinese proverb

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In this lab, we'll investigate the 802.11 wireless network protocol. Before beginning this lab, you might want to re-read Section 7.3 in the text¹. Since we'll be delving a bit deeper into 802.11 than is covered in the text, you might want to check out "A Technical Tutorial on the 802.11 Protocol," by Pablo Brenner (Breezecom Communications), http://www.sss-mag.com/pdf/802_11tut.pdf And, of course, there is the "bible" of 802.11 - the 4,379-page standard itself, "ANSI/IEEE Std 802.11-2020," available [here](#). But we've extracted out section 9.2.4.1 from the specification, and added in a handy cheat-sheet for 802.11 Wireshark display filters, [here](#), both of which will be *very* useful for this lab.

In this lab, we'll capture a trace from a wireless 802.11 WiFi interface on our computer/laptop. Here are the actions taken, assuming you're already connected to a WiFi network (which we'll refer to as your *home* network), when trace collection starts:

1. Make an HTTP request to <http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/wireshark-labs/alice.txt>
2. Make a request to <http://www.cs.umass.edu>
3. Disconnect from your home network
4. (optional step) Try to connect to another 802.11 wireless network whose beacon advertisements are being received, and for which you do *not* have access, and therefore your connection attempt will fail.
5. Connect again (successfully) to you home network.

Figure 1 shows the general setup for this 802.11 Wireshark lab.

¹ References to figures and sections are for the 8th edition of our text, *Computer Networks, A Top-down Approach*, 8th ed., J.F. Kurose and K.W. Ross, Addison-Wesley/Pearson, 2020. Our authors' website for this book is http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/kurose_ross You'll find lots of interesting open material there..

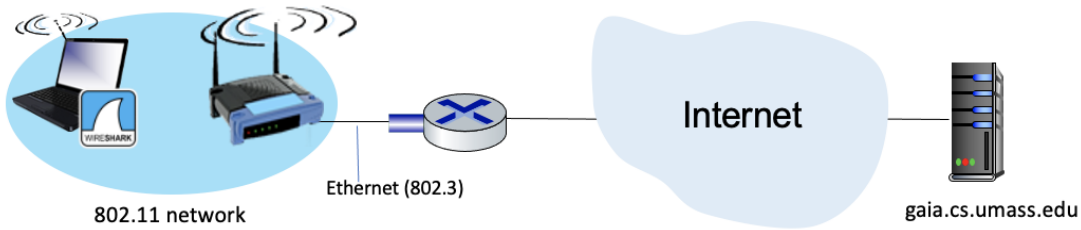


Figure 1: An 802.11 network, connected to a router, connected to the Internet

As usual, we've provided a trace file² of captured 802.11 frames for you to analyze in case you are not able to take the actions above. If you're doing this lab as part of a class, your teacher will provide details about how to hand in assignments, whether written or in an LMS.³ The questions below assume you are analyzing this provided trace (in particular, with respect to access point (AP) names, and timings in the trace). Of course, you're encouraged to gather your own trace, taking the five actions above, and answering the questions below from your own trace.

1. Getting Started

Let's take a look at our trace file. This trace was collected using on a computer in the home network of one of the authors, consisting of a Linksys 802.11g combined access point/router, with two wired PCs and one wireless host PC attached to the access point/router. The author is fortunate to have other access points (APs) in neighboring houses available as well, so we'll see a lot of frames that we're not interested in for this lab, such as beacon frames advertised by a neighbor's AP. You'll find the following wireless host activities in the trace file:

- The host is already associated with the *30 Munroe St* AP when the trace begins.
- At $t = 24.8282$, the host makes an HTTP request to <http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/wireshark-labs/alice.txt>. The IP address of gaia.cs.umass.edu is 128.119.245.12.
- At $t = 32.8259$, the host makes an HTTP request to <http://www.cs.umass.edu>, whose IP address is 128.119.240.19.

² If you're unable to run Wireshark on a live network connection, you can download the zip file <http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/wireshark-labs/wireshark-traces-8.1.zip> and extract the trace file `Wireshark_801_11.pcapng`.

³ For the author's class, when answering the following questions with hand-in assignments, students print out the GET and response messages (see the introductory Wireshark lab for an explanation of how to do this) and indicate where in the message they've found the information that answers a question. They do this by marking paper copies with a pen or annotating electronic copies with text in a colored font. There are LMS modules for teachers that allow students to answer these questions online and have answers auto-graded for these Wireshark labs at http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/kurose_ross/lms.htm

Faris Soepangat
1001374988
CSE 4344
Due April 29, 2024

- At $t = 49.5836$, the host disconnects from the *30 Munroe St* AP by issuing a DHCP Release message.
- At $t=63.0592$ the host associates again with the *30 Munroe St* AP.

Once you have downloaded the trace, you can load it into Wireshark and view the trace using the *File* pull down menu, choosing *Open*, and then selecting the Wireshark_801_11.pcapng trace file. The resulting display should look like Figure 2.

There are lots of captured frames in this trace, so we'll use display filters to display just selected types of frames as we analyze this trace. A handy reference for Wireshark Display filters for 802.11 frames is at http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/wireshark-labs/wireshark_802.11_filters_-_reference_sheet.pdf.

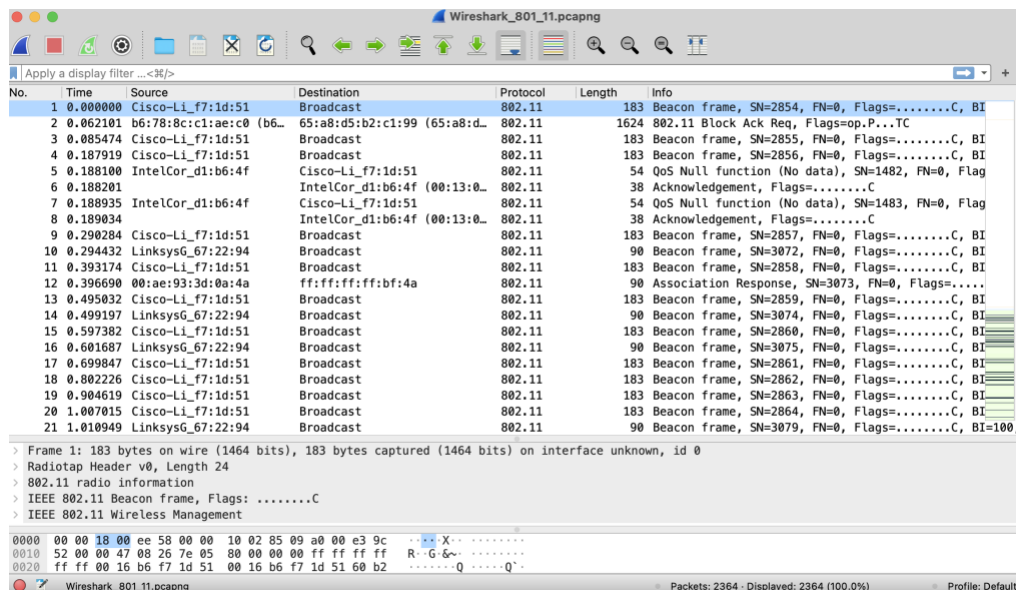


Figure 2: Wireshark window, after opening the Wireshark_801_11.pcapng file

2. Beacon Frames

First, let's take a look at 802.11 beacon frames. Recall that beacon frames are used by an 802.11 AP to advertise its existence. Let's use our 802.11 filter cheat-sheet ([here](#)): enter `wlan.fc.type_subtype == 8` into Wireshark's display filter window, so that Wireshark only displays beacon frames (which have an 802.11 subtype of 8). Your Wireshark window should look similar to Figure 3.

Faris Soepangat
1001374988
CSE 4344
Due April 29, 2024

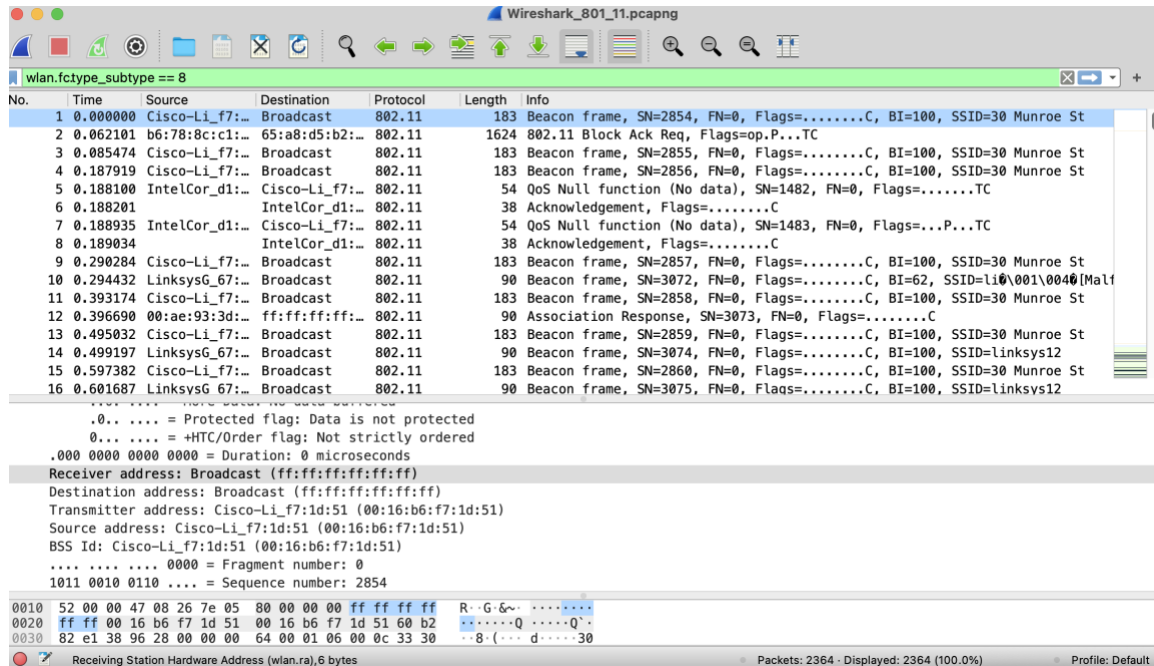
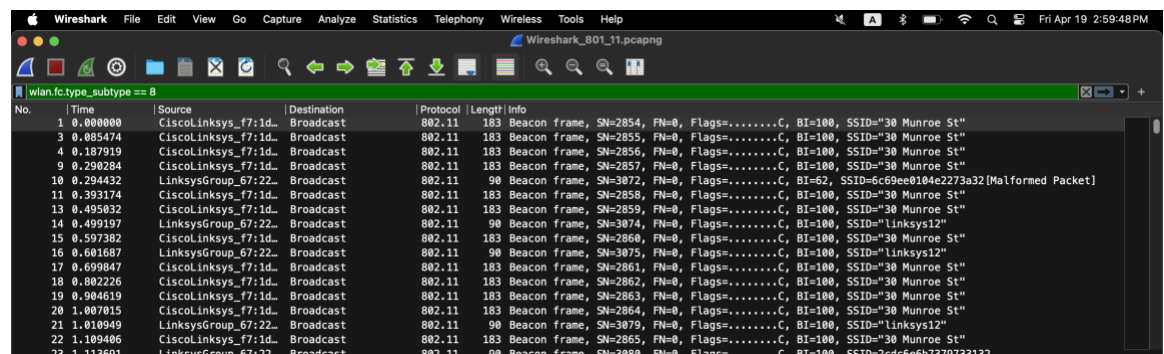


Figure3: Wireshark window, showing beacon frames

To answer some of the questions below, you'll want to look at the details in the *Info* field in the rightmost column of the Wireshark display; to answer other questions you'll need to dig into the "802.11 Protocol" frame and subfields in the middle Wireshark window.

1. What are the SSIDs of the two access points that are issuing most of the beacon frames in this trace? [Hint: look at the *Info* field. To display only beacon frames, enter `wlan.fc.type_subtype == 8` into the Wireshark display filter].

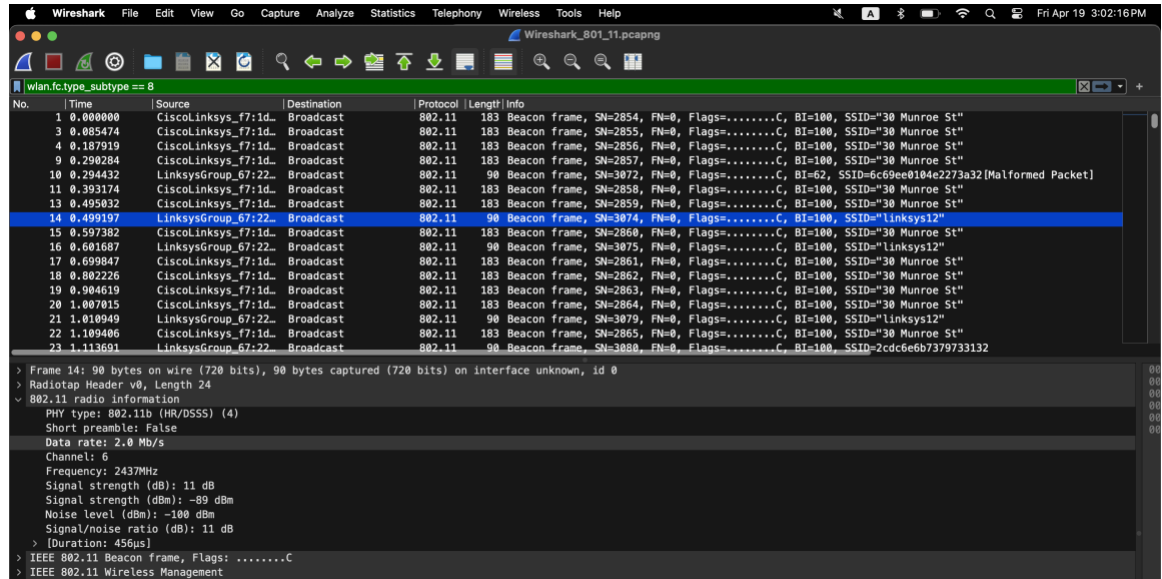
The SSIDs of the two access points that are issuing most of the beacon frames in this trace are '30 Munroe St' and 'linksys12'.



2. What 802.11 channel is being used by both of these access points [Hint: you'll need to dig into the radio information in an 802.11 beacon frame]

Faris Soepangat
1001374988
CSE 4344
Due April 29, 2024

Channel 6 is being used by both of these access points.

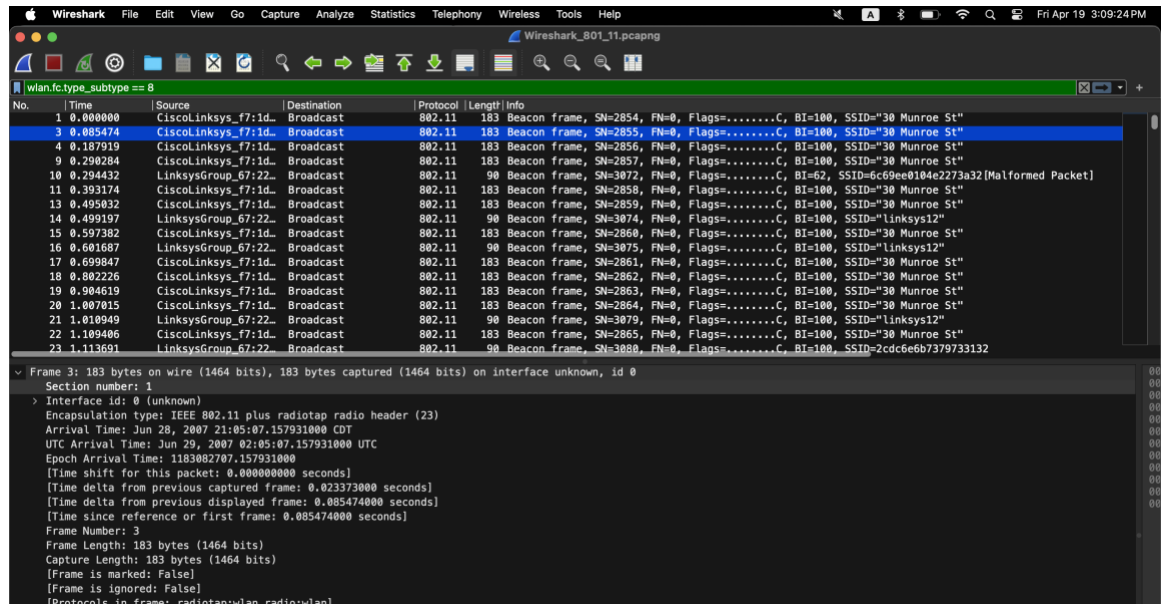


Now let's take a look at the beacon frame sent at $t=0.085474$.

3. What is the interval of time between the transmissions of beacon frames from this access point (AP)? (Hint: this interval of time is contained in a field within the beacon frame itself).

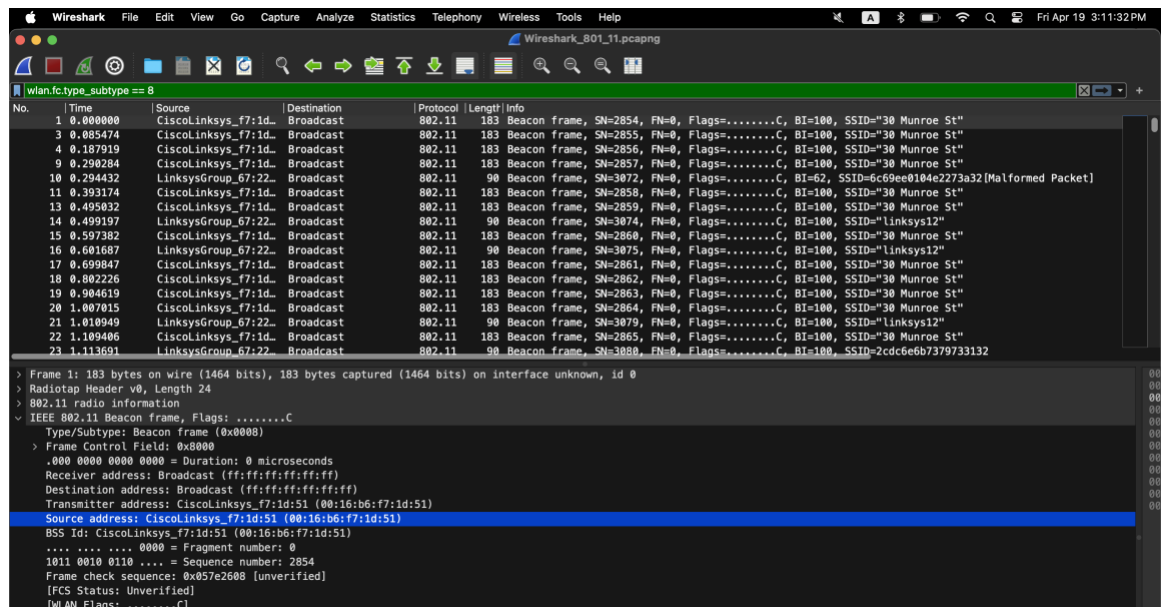
The interval of time between the transmissions of beacon frames from this access point (AP) is 0.1024 seconds.

Faris Soepangat
1001374988
CSE 4344
Due April 29, 2024



4. What (in hexadecimal notation) is the source MAC address on the beacon frame from this access point? Recall from Figure 7.13 in the text that the source, destination, and BSS are three addresses used in an 802.11 frame. For a detailed discussion of the 802.11 frame structure, see section 9.2.3-9.2.4.1 in the IEEE 802.11 standards document, excerpted [here](#).

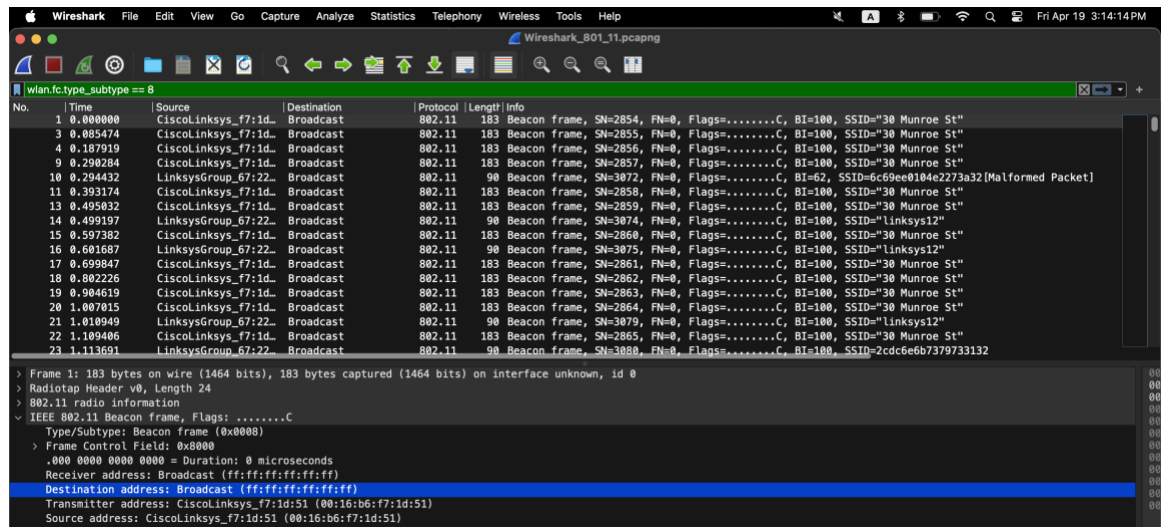
The source MAC address on the beacon frame from this access point is 00:16:b6:f7:1d:51.



Faris Soepangat
1001374988
CSE 4344
Due April 29, 2024

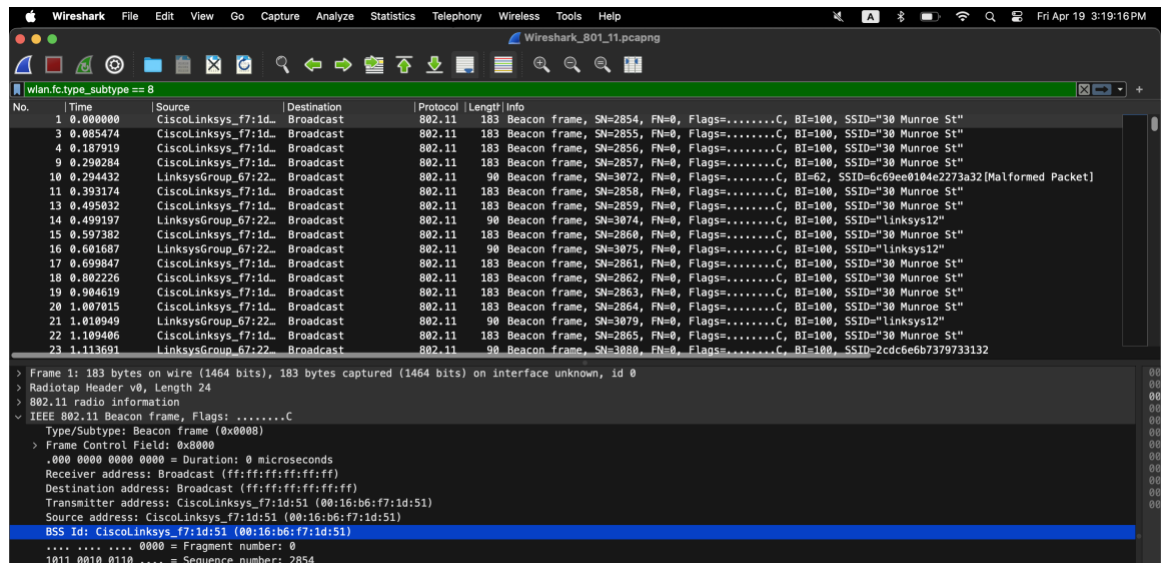
5. What (in hexadecimal notation) is the destination MAC address on the beacon frame from *30 Munroe St*??

The destination MAC address on the beacon frame from 30 Munroe St is ff:ff:ff:ff:ff:ff.



6. What (in hexadecimal notation) is the MAC BSS ID on the beacon frame from *30 Munroe St*?

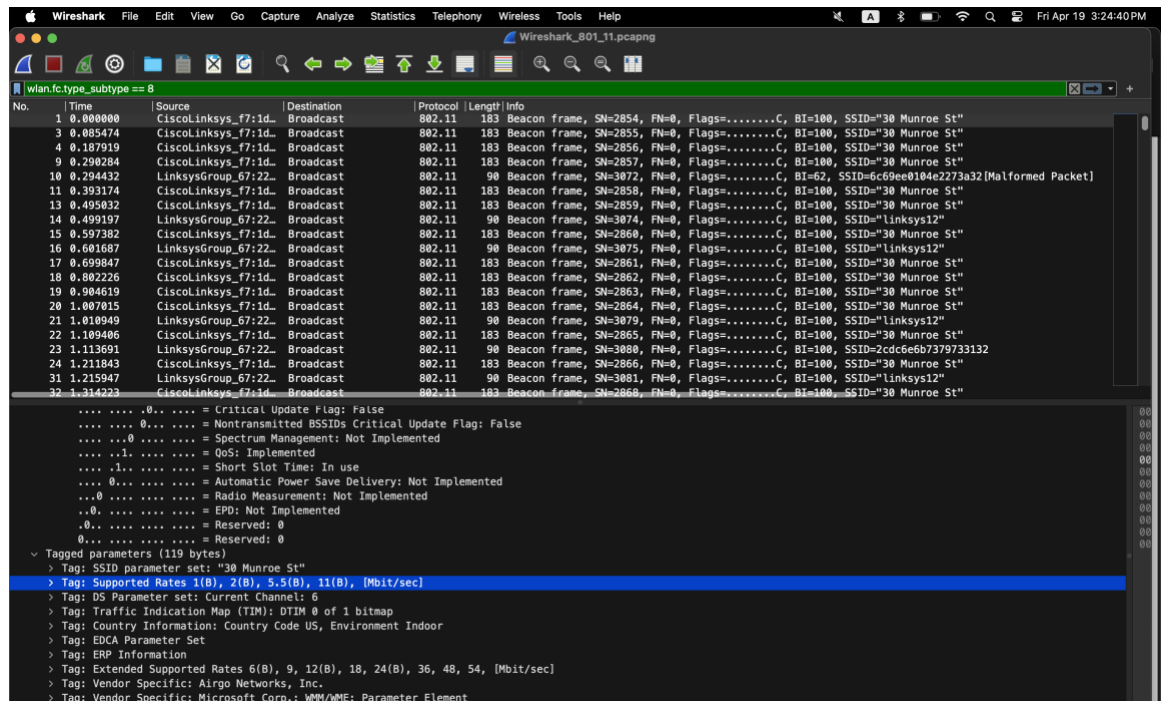
The MAC BSS ID on the beacon frame from 30 Munroe St is 00:16:b6:f7:1d:51.



Faris Soepangat
1001374988
CSE 4344
Due April 29, 2024

7. The beacon frames from the *30 Munroe St* access point advertise that the access point can support four data rates and eight additional “extended supported rates.” What are these rates? [Note: the traces were taken on a rather old AP].

The four data rates are 1(B), 2(B), 5.5(B) and 11(B) [Mbit/sec]. The eight additional “extended supported rates” are 6(B), 9, 12(B), 18, 24(B) 36, 48, and 54 [Mbit/sec].



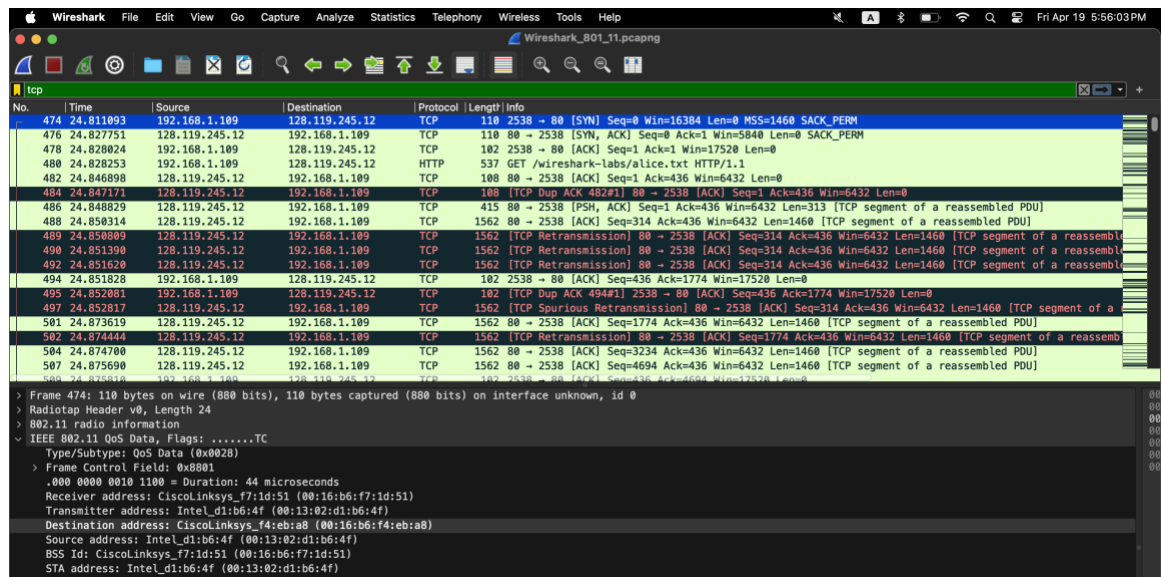
3. Data Transfer

Since the trace starts with the host already associated with the AP, let's next look at data transfer over an 802.11 association before looking at AP association/disassociation. Recall that in this trace, at $t = 24.82$, the host makes an HTTP request to <http://gaia.cs.umass.edu/wireshark-labs/alice.txt>. The IP address of gaia.cs.umass.edu is 128.119.245.12. Then, at $t = 32.82$, the host makes an HTTP request to <http://www.cs.umass.edu>.

8. Find the 802.11 frame containing the SYN TCP segment for this first TCP session (that downloads *alice.txt*) at $t = 24.8110$. What are three MAC address fields in the 802.11 frame? Which MAC address in this frame corresponds to the wireless host (give the hexadecimal representation of the MAC address for the host)? To the access point? To the first-hop router? What is the IP address of the wireless host sending this TCP segment? What is the destination IP address for the TCP syn segment?

Faris Soepangat
1001374988
CSE 4344
Due April 29, 2024

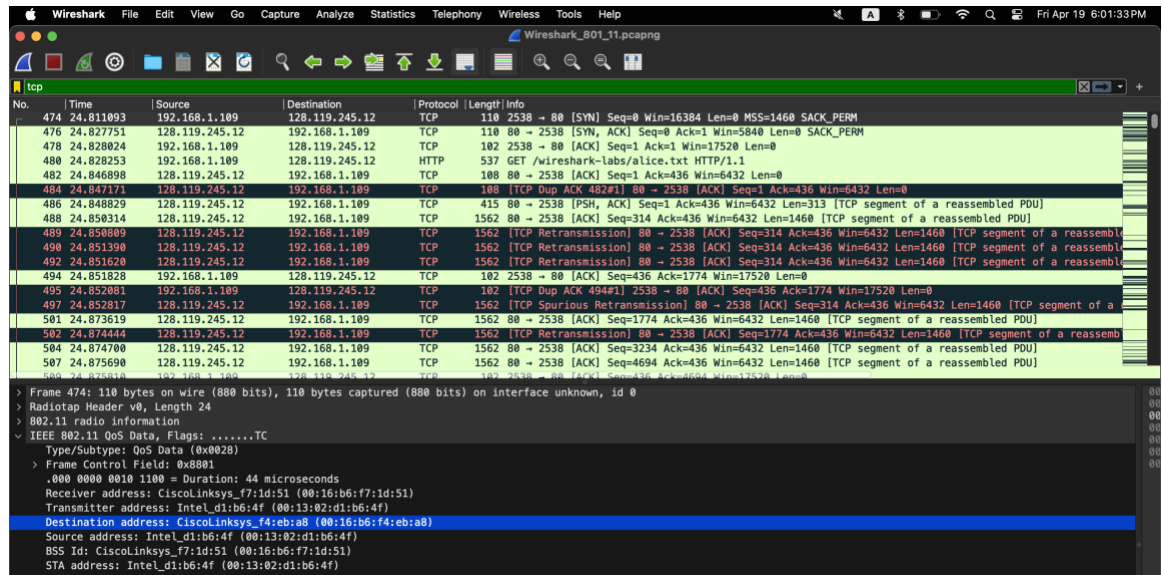
The three MAC address fields in the 802.11 frame are the Destination Address of 00:16:b6:f4:eb:a8, Source Address of 00:13:02:d1:b6:4f, and BSS Id of 00:16:b6:f7:1d:51. The Destination Address corresponds to the first-hop router. The Source Address corresponds to the host. The BSS Id corresponds to the access point. The IP address of the wireless host sending this TCP segment is 192.168.1.109. The destination IP address for the TCP syn segment is 128.199.245.12.



9. Does the destination IP address of this TCP SYN correspond to the host, access point, first-hop router, or the destination web server?

The destination IP address of this TCP SYN corresponds to the destination web server gaia.cs.umass.edu.

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1001374988
CSE 4344
Due April 29, 2024



10. Find the 802.11 frame containing the SYNACK segment for this TCP session received at $t=24.8277$. What are three MAC address fields in the 802.11 frame? Which MAC address in this frame corresponds to the host? To the access point? To the first-hop router? Does the sender MAC address in the frame correspond to the IP address of the device that sent the TCP segment encapsulated within this datagram? (Hint: review Figure 6.19 in the text if you are unsure of how to answer this question, or the corresponding part of the previous question. It's particularly important that you understand this).

The three MAC address fields in the 802.11 frame are the Destination Address of 91:2a:b0:49:b6:4f, Source Address of 00:16:b6:f4:eb:a8, and BSS Id of 00:16:b6:f7:1d:51. The Destination Address corresponds to the host. The Source Address corresponds to the first-hop router. The BSS Id corresponds to the access point. The sender MAC address in the frame does not correspond to the IP address of the device that sent the TCP segment encapsulated within this datagram. The IP address of the wireless host sending this TCP segment is 128.119.245.12. The destination IP address for the TCP syn segment is 192.168.1.109.

Faris Soepangat
1001374988
CSE 4344
Due April 29, 2024

The image shows a Wireshark packet capture interface. The top menu bar includes File, Edit, View, Go, Capture, Analyze, Statistics, Telephony, Wireless, Tools, and Help. The title bar indicates the file is 'Wireshark_801_11.pcapng' and the date is 'Fri Apr 19 6:12:49 PM'. The main display area shows a list of captured packets. The selected packet is number 476, which is a TCP segment. The packet details pane on the right shows the structure of the packet, including the Ethernet II header, Internet Protocol Version 4 header, and Transmission Control Protocol header. The packet list pane shows the following packets:

No.	Time	Source	Destination	Protocol	Length	Info
474	24.811093	192.168.1.109	128.119.245.12	TCP	110	2538 → 80 [SYN] Seq=0 Win=16384 Len=0 MSS=1460 SACK_PERM
476	24.827751	128.119.245.12	192.168.1.109	TCP	110	80 → 2538 [SYN, ACK] Seq=0 Ack=1 Win=5840 Len=0 SACK_PERM
478	24.828024	192.168.1.109	128.119.245.12	TCP	102	2538 → 80 [ACK] Seq=1 Ack=1 Win=17520 Len=0
480	24.828253	192.168.1.109	128.119.245.12	HTTP	537	GET /wireshark-labs/alice.txt HTTP/1.1
482	24.846898	128.119.245.12	192.168.1.109	TCP	108	80 → 2538 [ACK] Seq=1 Ack=436 Win=6432 Len=0
484	24.847171	128.119.245.12	192.168.1.109	TCP	108	[TCP Dup ACK 482#1] 80 → 2538 [ACK] Seq=1 Ack=436 Win=6432 Len=0
486	24.848629	128.119.245.12	192.168.1.109	TCP	415	80 → 2538 [PSH, ACK] Seq=1 Ack=436 Win=6432 Len=313 [TCP segment of a reassembled PDU]
488	24.850314	128.119.245.12	192.168.1.109	TCP	1562	80 → 2538 [ACK] Seq=314 Ack=436 Win=6432 Len=1460 [TCP segment of a reassembled PDU]
489	24.850809	128.119.245.12	192.168.1.109	TCP	1562	[TCP Retransmission] 80 → 2538 [ACK] Seq=314 Ack=436 Win=6432 Len=1460 [TCP segment of a reassembled PDU]
490	24.851390	128.119.245.12	192.168.1.109	TCP	1562	[TCP Retransmission] 80 → 2538 [ACK] Seq=314 Ack=436 Win=6432 Len=1460 [TCP segment of a reassembled PDU]
492	24.851620	128.119.245.12	192.168.1.109	TCP	1562	[TCP Retransmission] 80 → 2538 [ACK] Seq=314 Ack=436 Win=6432 Len=1460 [TCP segment of a reassembled PDU]
494	24.851828	192.168.1.109	128.119.245.12	TCP	102	2538 → 80 [ACK] Seq=436 Ack=1774 Win=17520 Len=0
495	24.852081	192.168.1.109	128.119.245.12	TCP	102	[TCP Dup ACK 494#1] 2538 → 80 [ACK] Seq=436 Ack=1774 Win=17520 Len=0
497	24.852817	128.119.245.12	192.168.1.109	TCP	1562	[TCP Spurious Retransmission] 80 → 2538 [ACK] Seq=314 Ack=436 Win=6432 Len=1460 [TCP segment of a reassembled PDU]
501	24.873619	128.119.245.12	192.168.1.109	TCP	1562	80 → 2538 [ACK] Seq=1774 Ack=436 Win=6432 Len=1460 [TCP segment of a reassembled PDU]
502	24.874444	128.119.245.12	192.168.1.109	TCP	1562	[TCP Retransmission] 80 → 2538 [ACK] Seq=1774 Ack=436 Win=6432 Len=1460 [TCP segment of a reassembled PDU]
504	24.874700	128.119.245.12	192.168.1.109	TCP	1562	80 → 2538 [ACK] Seq=3234 Ack=436 Win=6432 Len=1460 [TCP segment of a reassembled PDU]
507	24.875690	128.119.245.12	192.168.1.109	TCP	1562	80 → 2538 [ACK] Seq=4694 Ack=436 Win=6432 Len=1460 [TCP segment of a reassembled PDU]
509	24.876810	192.168.1.109	128.119.245.12	TCP	102	2538 → 80 [ACK] Seq=436 Ack=1774 Win=17520 Len=0

The packet details pane for packet 476 shows the following structure:

- Frame 476: 110 bytes on wire (880 bits), 110 bytes captured (880 bits) on interface unknown, id 0
- Radiotap Header v0, Length 24
- 802.11 radio information
- IEEE 802.11 QoS Data, Flags: ..MP..F.C
 - Type/Subtype: QoS Data (0x0028)
 - Frame Control Field: 0x8832
 - Duration/ID: 11560 (reserved)
 - Receiver address: 91:2a:b0:49:b6:4f (91:2a:b0:49:b6:4f)
 - Transmitter address: CiscoLinksys_f7:1d:51 (00:16:b6:f7:1d:51)
 - Destination address: 91:2a:b0:49:b6:4f (01:2a:b0:49:b6:4f)
 - Source address: CiscoLinksys_f4:eb:a0 (00:16:b6:f4:eb:a0)
 - BSS Id: CiscoLinksys_f7:1d:51 (00:16:b6:f7:1d:51)
 - STA address: 91:2a:b0:49:b6:4f (91:2a:b0:49:b6:4f)