

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. This month's topic is a follow on to the last two month's topics. There is a threat from the internet that's getting more play these days: **RATs**.

Most of you are probably thinking of the larger cousin of the mouse, but I'm referring to Remote Access Trojans or keystroke-logging trojans. Trojan horses are little programs that promise one thing – say, a smiley face cursor – but do another – for example, record every keystroke you make or every Web site you visit. It is estimated that there are more Trojan horses on the web than there are viruses and worms. One reason for this is their ability to capture specific information. Hackers are now looking to steal money instead of crashing computers and networks. In fact, there is a group called the HangUp Team in Russia that openly advertises its programming services, claiming that they will custom design a keystroke-logging RAT to defraud the bank or credit card company of your choice. As an example, they may have engineered a recent spate of low-threat viruses known as Korgo. The Korgo virus opens a back door on your computer, then downloads the Padobot keystroke-logging RAT that captures your personal login information and, after you've completed your session, sends the information to a cracker. The cracker, posing as you, then logs in and makes a very large withdrawal from your account!

While this does sound scary and it is, you can protect yourself by using a good anti-virus program, a good firewall, and keep your computer updated with the latest patches. Another and most important thing to do is to look at what is running on your computer and get rid of suspect programs. These protective items should be standard on all of your computers. I would also note that if you have a network, you should require these same things of any guest computers that are connected to it. Since, these guests are connecting on the network side of your firewall, any virus or Trojan on them have already breached your first line of defense.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer to, please forward them to me. My email address is meggert@wi.rr.com, my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.