

The Eastern Iowa DXer

The Official Newsletter of the
Eastern Iowa DX Association



An affiliated club of the American Radio Relay League

October 2008

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Club Officers

President: Glen Kesselring KØJGH
Vice President: Steve Miller NØSM
Secretary Treasurer: George Carsner WØPPF

Packet Cluster **WB8ZRL**

147.51, 144.91, 223.40, CRNETROM

Repeater Committee: Al Groff KØVM
Joe Finkstein WØMJN

Repeater: **NØDX/R**

144.59 / 145.19 (tone 192.8)

Membership Committee: Jim Spencer WØSR
Tom Vavra WB8ZRL
Nelson Moyer KUØA

October EIDX Meeting

Friday, October 17 at 7:30 p.m. at Kirkwood Community College, Room 219C. The program will feature a talk by Nelson KUØA on low band receive antennas, and show-and-tell for members with something interesting to share.

FLASH!

Look for EIDX members Rod KØDAS and Tom NYØV on Christmas Island, Eastern Kiribati October 23-28. Preliminary call sign information: T32DAS & T32DXX. Rod and Tom will be on during the CQWW SSB Contest and will appreciate contacts from all of the EIDX and friends! If you hear them, please spot them on the cluster and on the club reflector.

From the President's Pen - Glen Kesselring KØJGH



Here we are at the beginning of another fall season of contests and hopefully some improved band conditions. The BY operators were busy for the Olympics. I think Terry said he worked all five stations. It was nice to see some of our members at the WØDXCC convention in Rochester, MN. I also attended the W9DXCC convention again this year. There were several very well presented DXpedition programs and some low band antenna topics featured. With the sunspots barely getting a start it seems like the low bands may be where the DX will be for a few months. Our club year starts the first of October so this meeting will be election of officers. I would like to take this opportunity to say "thanks" to all who have helped with programs, picnics, great news letters, web page updates, packet, repeater and many other great leadership rolls by a great bunch of DX and contest operators.

I think I can say for many of us as DXers, that a major DXpedition would be a life long goal. In 2002, Brad K4RT and I were talking of where a location might be that wasn't half way around the globe and somewhat politically safe. KP5 and KP1 came to mind right away. It was in those early stages that we began the long process of what for me was the satisfaction of getting a letter with Fish and Wildlife heading indicating they were going to open the Desecheo wildlife refuge. What a day!! As you have followed the story, a group of seven including K4RT, WØGJ, WØNB, K1KD and KØJGH from our club became a part of what is known as the KP1-5 Project team. All of us are scheduled to go to Desecheo Is. sometime after January 15, 2009. Glenn WØGJ, Bob K4UEE, Mike NA5U and Brad K4RT were most recently the final force that created the winning application in the eyes of the committee that reviewed several applications.



Desecheo Island.

I've enjoyed serving as EIDX president for the past two years. We are a club of outstanding talent and competitive accomplishments. I'm looking forward to the ideas and leadership of our new officers. Please help them out with your ideas and suggestions.

73, Glen KØJGH

From the VP - Steve Miller NØSM

Hello EIDX Members from VP Steve NØSM.

Hope you have found some DX to work in recent times. As you will read, our meeting is Friday, October 17th and I hope all of you will attend. This meeting is the one where new officers will be elected and we'll hear about the DX that is on the horizon!

I asked our Midwest Division Director, Bruce Frahm, KØBJ, to tell us what it is like to be an ARRL director, what is involved, his greatest pleasures and biggest frustrations, and anything else he thought would give insight into his job. I hope you'll enjoy Bruce's article.

A long time ago and a lot of patience ago, Jerry Rappel, WWØE, asked for some tower help and I told him I'd be glad to. Unfortunately, scheduling the trip without running into home conflicts didn't work out. Finally Jerry found a couple of guys in the Davenport area who not only worked on his tower but put up a new antenna for him. I asked him to tell us about it and his write up and photos will better acquaint you with him and his station. Obviously his new installation works...but I'll let you read about it.

Brad Farrell, K4RT, maintains his EIDX membership even though he now lives in the D.C. area (in Virginia, I think). If you listen to ABC Radio News, you'll hear his stories from time to time and he is the over night anchor on weekends. Brad has an interest in construction and details his latest project for us. You'll certainly enjoy it. He worries that the engineers will be critical but I told him it didn't matter. He's exploring and enjoying another avenue of amateur radio and it's important to share it.

I'm not sure how much news we'll get in the stop the presses article but you may have read that Dr. Glenn Johnson and Bob Allphin are leading a team to Desecheo, an island that is in high demand by most of the rest of the world. It will take place between January and the end of March. Our own el presidenté Glen Kesselring, KØJGH, will be among the team as well as Jim Livengood, WØNB, Brad and Glen's son, Grant, K1KD. Brad is going to try to give you a little information about the expedition though I think details are sketchy at this point since the permissions were just granted.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone for the help during my year as Vice-President. Doing the newsletter has been fun especially having such outstanding talent within our own club. I hope you will support the efforts of your new Vice-President as much as you have me. I would also like to thank Glen and George for their valuable and timely information and especially Brad Farrell who has done a great job in putting the articles into an interesting and attractive format. In closing, I would like to ask each member to examine his/her (do we have any YLs?) special skills or projects and to write an article about it for the newsletter. It's not the special skill or project that is important but it gives us better insight into you and we get to know you better. Thanks again for giving me this opportunity this year. I will be glad to assist next year's Vice-President if he/she can use a hand. 73 and I'll be looking for you on the air. Steve NØSM

P.S. I neglected to thank Terry and Shanna Cellman for hosting a great picnic. The hospitality was great, the location was great, and Terry certainly hasn't lost his touch at cooking those delicious Johnsonville brats!!

Growing Into The Director's Chair - Bruce Frahm KØBJ

NØSM asked me to write a little about being Midwest Director which is my pleasure as it'll serve as a good reminder and reality check for me. I came on the ARRL board as Vice Director in the early 90s with Lew K4VX. When he retired I was reluctant to move forward due to having just adopted a second son, and EIDX member Wade WØEJ ran for and took on the job. I served with Wade for 2+ terms and saw his dedication, knowledge and EE background greatly benefit our division and organization. When Wade became a Silent Key I knew his place was impossible to fill, but I am in that chair, have just been elected to a new term and look forward to continuing to serve the division and League with the help of Vice Director Cliff Ahrens KØCA and you the members.

A big eye opener for Lew and me was the diversity of interests that hams have, and the support those are given through ARRL. I felt myself to be reasonably rounded, but in visiting Hq. and studying its operations and meeting hams around the division, I quickly realized there was A LOT more to learn. Being primarily a ragchew DXer and casual contester, I was forced (joyfully) to learn more about other aspects of our diverse avocation.

Emergency communications and international relations are two specific areas where I've found a lot of unexpected enjoyment and education. The work of ARRL staff and Field Organization volunteers is really amazing. We are fortunate to have a robust national society and in fact are very much looked up to and relied upon by the other societies and amateurs around the world. And the newer hams seem to have special interest in public

service communications. While it's not true everywhere, many areas have organizations that actually seek out and utilize hams and their communication skills on an ongoing basis. Often active clubs are key to making this work, and where there is a healthy club there is likely to be lots of amateur radio fun.

I think a big ongoing trend for ham radio will be more movement to digital modes. We'll have ever more usage of the internet and computers using VOIP, software-defined radios, contest and award aids, "digital mode du jour" and other software experimentation, etc. I was sorry to see our regulation by bandwidth effort a couple years ago not reach critical mass. The USA's current reg. by mode is stifling creativity and flexibility, and will be more constraining as time goes on. Most countries are regulated ONLY by entire frequency bands – there is no statutory mode restriction by sub-band. This does necessitate usage of Gentlemen's agreements but affords great flexibility. Apparently the US ham population isn't ready to trust itself to take this step. I think it is, and it will thrive once we make the move.

One aspect of the job that's pleased me is hamfest travel. Paul Grauer WØFIR loved it. I thought I'd 'survive' it, and it was a surprise to find that I LOVE meeting folks at hamfests. It's rewarding to be able to direct someone to a Hq or other resource that I'm aware of through my travels to Newington and around the division. Having said that, I don't attend a large number of hamfests. There are probably only 7 or so in a year throughout the division that either Cliff or I try to attend. Being in nw Kansas there are only a few clubs less than 200 miles from me, but I do attend a couple non-local club meetings a year. Cliff and I attend two board meetings per year, and travel to 0-4 additional board committee meetings. These days a lot of work is done via email. I especially welcome member queries. I'm not that smart about answering a lot of questions, but I usually know someone at Hq or a resource within the division who will have the answer.

My committee interests have always been mainly in the operations side of ARRL, and I normally serve on the Programs & Services Committee. I am currently chair, and we were busy wrapping up and reporting a year-long study of Section Governance at the July meeting. The challenges posed by CW Skimmer, easily remoted operating and other technological advances, and how to deal with them in the awards and contest environment, are taking up the time of our Advisory Committees and the PSC. They are fascinating issues with few black and white "givens".

I was pleased that President W5ZN took my recommendation and appointed Cliff as Vice Director. With his judicial and DX background he quickly was put on a handful of standing and ad hoc board committees. The DXAC lost him but he is utilized more heavily and diversely now. Cliff is and will continue to be a key asset for ARRL.

I've lived in Colby nearly all my life. We farm with family here and because of that it's not likely we'll move. With lots of extended family involved it's usually possible to get away for ham events, other than during late September and October. Our son Jon KBØMBS is 27 and teaches English to native 1st Graders in Thailand. <http://jonfrahm.blogspot.com>. He's not on the air there. Karlyn is 12. Janice and I spent 10 months in 1979 on Windjammer's Yankee Trader sailing around the world. We spent about 50% of our time on land, visiting 54 ports for 1-14 days (typically 2-3). It was great to be in advance touch with local hams and have hot showers and ready (often eager)

guides once we were in port. Best ham operations were /CE0A (at Fr. Dave CE0AE's QTH) and VR6BJ (at VR6TC's QTH). ZF KZ5 HC2 KH8 5W 3D H4 YJ were other fun ones. My emphasis was RTTY with cw a close second. N1DX was on the ship too and typically we'd sightsee in the day, operate at night and catch up on sleep as we made passage to the next locale.

I've also operated in Europe on vacation with Slinky dipoles, Spider mobile whips with radials, etc. I'm a big proponent of suitcase based, casual DXing. N1DX and I got back together for a KP5 trip in 1992 when he was wintering over in KP4. We had a 3-day Murphy-tempting DXpedition with a lone FT-757, 500W Honda generator, Spider antenna and longwire/tuner. No boat standing offshore, no operating table (took a piece of plywood and scrounged for rocks). We took turns operating and with no major issues from Mr. Murphy, made 6400 Qs. We operated the WARC bands – once K5UR ASKED us to and gave us the band limits! My only prior WARC band ops were first day “been there, done that” QSOs. I'm been a big WARC-band fan ever since. This operation was back when KP5 wasn't super rare, but it was kinda rare and lots of fun to do in a casual way. Nowadays my DX-side ops are mainly trips to our timeshare where I operate ZF2BJ from the ZF1A shack, 20 minutes' drive from our condo. It's great to get away for a week or two in January, and typically it's just after the January ARRL board meeting.

Thank you for the confidence you've shown in Cliff and me and for your support of ARRL. As an active club you're the lifeblood of amateur radio. Congratulations.

73 Bruce Frahm KØBJ - Colby, Kansas

My New Cushcraft D3W Rotatable Dipole - Jerry Rappel WW0E

First of all thanks to Larry KØIS, and Gary KWØJ for all their help with this project. I'm trying to get them to join EIDX. This is my first attempt at writing an article on any subject in quite awhile.



After just logging over 100 countries on 40 and 80 meters last year, (long time coming), I decided I needed another challenge. I use a Butternut HF2V for 40/80 meters. Still need about 10 QSL's confirmed on each band for 5BDXCC. I had the Butternut 30MRK - 30 meter coil for it at one time and worked about 35 countries. So what next, basket weaving? Hey - how about 12 and 17 meters? More DX! Question - what types of antenna are out there being used? After researching QST articles, antenna discussion groups, etc. I decided the Cushcraft D3W would be appropriate. First I began by looking in QRZ.com for some users and reviews of the D3W, as I wanted to know if there would be any harmonic relationship between my Mosley TA33jr and the dipole. They would be separated between 3-4 feet on the mast. 9 out of the 10 people I contacted said that no coupling or adverse effects were noticed with a situation like mine. Not an easy antenna to find.

I happened to run across a D3W for sale, it was from a SK estate. Never used. A lucky find, now to find a climber. While talking with Steve Miller NØSM, at an EIDX meeting awhile ago, he offered to do the antenna work. Well, Steve and I talked back and forth waiting for the right time, weather, etc. We just never got together on it. No big deal. Antenna work takes time and planning. And then he had his back problems. While searching the local WØBXR club for the gin pole, Larry had asked me what project I was working on. He said he could help out, along with his friend Gary. And this would save Steve a long drive from Ottumwa.



So on the afternoon of October 1st, 2008, I finished the final assembly on the 34 ft. Cushcraft D3W. Later that evening the old ATV 70cm antenna that was on the top of the mast was down, (I just never used ATV that much) and the D3W in it's place. A rather smooth no problems evening. The dipole is mounted perpendicular to the boom of the Mosley. My SWR readings have been excellent across the HF bands using these two antennas. This dipole has the benefit of being able to be rotated. Just 90 degree rotation is enough for 360 degree coverage.



Additional tower maintenance was also taken care of, all hardware replaced with new galvanized bolts, u-bolts, etc. And some cold galvanizing compound where needed. I bought this Rohn 25G - 50' tower from my Elmer 18 years ago, it was about 15 years old at that time. Looks like new again. Also new in the shack is a Yaesu FT1000MP, quite a gigantic step upward from my old dependable Icom 751A. I'm still learning all the menu settings, etc. on this rig. What a great receiver! Going to have to make up some new cables for this radio so I can get back into RTTY, and SSTV modes, I just received my FR5AB QSL card for a SSTV contact a few years ago. Maybe I'll add a longwire for 160 next year.

Again thanks to all, especially my wife for the snacks prepared during the antenna party, and Larry, and Gary. P.S. I nearly omitted that it works!! The first two stations I worked on 17 meters were FO/DJ7RJ on Marquesas, and E51NOU, North Cook!

Government to Allow KP5 DXpedition - Brad Farrell K4RT

You've likely heard by now that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has authorized a DXpedition to Desecheo Island KP5. This will be the first DXpedition to Desecheo in about 15 years pursuant to a permit issued by the government agency that controls access to the island. See DXCC Rules, Section III, 2(c).

Desecheo Island seen from NW coast of Puerto Rico.



Bob Allphin K4UEE, Copyright © 2008.

Presently, USFWS is planning to issue a permit to the KP1-5 Project team for an operation of approximately two weeks sometime between January 15 and March 30, 2009. Having not been active for so long, Desecheo, just 14 miles off the northwest shore of Puerto Rico, is on the Top 10 Most Wanted DXCC Entities list, especially for the rest of the world.

Considerable credit for the upcoming KP5 DXpedition must be given to USFWS. We presented our case for access to the island and USFWS found a way to give ham radio a trial run within the boundaries of its mission for the Desecheo refuge.

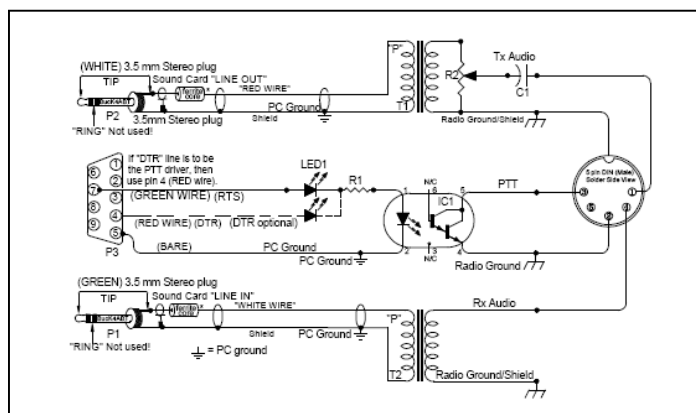
We couldn't have gotten there without EIDX members Glen KØJGH, Glenn WØGJ, and Jim Livengood WØNB, who are part of the KP1-5 Project. I expect that more of the story will be told in good time. For now, the focus is on planning the DXpedition. Glenn WØGJ and Bob Allphin K4UEE are leading that effort. As plans develop, we'll keep you informed through the web site www.kp5.us.

Trying PSK-31 on the Cheap - Brad Farrell K4RT

Over the summer, I finally decided to try PSK-31. I downloaded *Digipan* freeware (www.digipan.net) and used several alligator clip leads and some resistors for padding in connecting the soundboard output of my PC to the audio input of my transceiver for AFSK contacts. It worked and I made a few contacts. But the wires and resistors were a less than permanent configuration and I was getting audio loop-back from my sound-card output when I transmitted, distorting my transmit audio according to stations worked. Discussing the matter with Dale NV8U, he suggested building the audio isolation circuit described on *BUXcomm*'s packet radio web site www.packetradio.com.

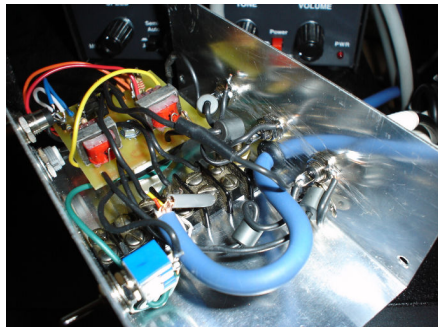
The *BUXcomm* schematic diagram is shown below. The circuit consists of two audio isolation transformers, an opto-isolator integrated circuit, which uses an LED and a photo-transistor to convert the audio signal to an optical signal then back to an audio signal, thereby breaking the electrical path and eliminating the audio loop-back problem. A standard LED connected to the push-to-talk (PTT) circuit illuminates when the software keys the rig.

I obtained the transformers, the opto-isolator, a 1K Ohm pot and printed circuit board from *BUXcomm* for less than \$10 (including shipping). I bought an aluminum enclosure and a computer DIN cable at Radio Shack. The rest of the parts and wiring came from my junk box. I used what I had on hand, including wiring of a gauge larger than needed for this application.



The *BUXcomm* circuit uses the circuit board mount 1K pot for setting the general range of the soundcard audio output, with refined adjustments to be done using the soundcard window on your computer.

I did not like making fine adjustments to the soundcard output in Windows on the fly during a QSO. So I scrounged a 10K panel mount pot from an old PC circuit board, added some resistors across the terminals to reduce the range to around 2K and mounted it on the front panel of the enclosure. This works well for fine adjustments and, for me, it's much easier to adjust the panel mount pot knob to make a quick adjustment on air. Also, I installed a switch on the front panel to break the 12VDC output from the serial port used to key the transmitter (PTT) when I operate RTTY using *MMTTY* software because my RTTY configuration does not use it, and the 12VDC keys the rig. This eliminated the problem of my RTTY software putting my transmitter key down.



After soldering the parts to the circuit board, I suspended the board using a ceramic post screwed to the bottom of the enclosure. The transmit/receive audio and PTT are routed from the circuit board to a terminal strip that connects to the blue DIN computer cable which passes through the back of the enclosure (see photo, left) and to the DIN plug on the back of my Yaesu transceiver. You will need to consult your transceiver manual for the appropriate plug type and wiring configuration (e.g. PTT, audio in, audio out).

Also, note the PTT voltage your rig requires to ensure that the BUXcomm is compatible with your rig.

Initially, I soldered these connections, but decided to use a terminal strip to make future alterations easier. The terminal strip I had on hand was too long, but that was solved with the aid of a hacksaw. The audio to and from the circuit board and the PC and the 12VDC from the PC serial port for PTT are also routed through the back of the enclosure, connected to RCA plugs and corresponding cables to the PC, as shown.

I had several small ferrite beads on hand I added to some of the wiring in an attempt to suppress RF. But since my wire leads are short, I was barely able to wrap one turn around the beads. I added a couple of snap-on ferrites to the audio cables connecting the sound card to the interface. The labels on the front panel are temporary until I find something that looks better, and I still need to add labels to the rear panel.



The total build and test time was about 2 hours. I suggest testing the interface during the building stage to ensure that your software is keying the transmitter. If it does not key properly, check your wiring and your software configuration carefully. Once you're satisfied the software is configured properly and the rig is keying you can then finish up connections and putting the cover on the enclosure.

The interface works well. In a few weeks of very casual operating I have worked a number of garden variety DX entities in Europe, the Caribbean and Central and South

America on 40, 30 and 20 meters running 10-30 Watts output. Once I set the audio level using the panel mount pot, I've had to make only slight adjustments a couple of times. I have operated RTTY for years and PSK-31 is just as fun and, of course, amazing in that you can make DX contacts running as little as 10 Watts.

Cold Galvanizing - Jerry Rappel WW0E

One good way of treating your tower when it has corrosion is to paint it with cold galvanizing compound, such as Rust-Oleum brand, (about \$5.00 for a 16 oz. spray can) - from Menards, etc. for light surface rust areas. If it's a heavier corrosion, clean the metal thoroughly with a Scotchbrite pad.

DO NOT use steel wool or sandpaper. You don't want to remove any galvanizing from the tower. Then I used rust encapsulator, Eastwood brand. (about \$20.00 a 16 oz. spray can - found it on the internet, www.eastwoodco.com (automotive stores may also stock this). It prevents further corrosion. Then I used the cold galvanizing over the encapsulator a few hours later when it had completely dried.

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***See you Friday, October 17th, 7:30 PM in
Room 219C, Kirkwood Community College
Pizza afterward!***

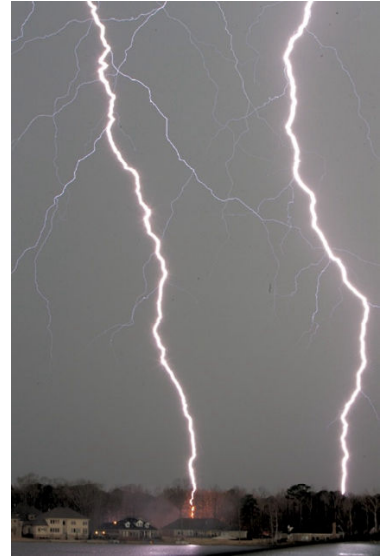
2008 EIDXA Meeting Schedule

Look for this information on the club web-page www.eidxa.org. Meeting information on the web site is up to date to ensure everyone has timely access to the information between newsletters.

Next Meeting

Oct. 17 – 7:30 p.m., Kirkwood Community College, Room 219C. Program: KUØA on low band receive antennas; Show & Tell.

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What those of us who have been hit respect most!!
Photo: Nelson Moyer KUØA. Copyright © 2008.