The Eastern Iowa DXer

The Official Newsletter of the
Eastern Iowa DX Association

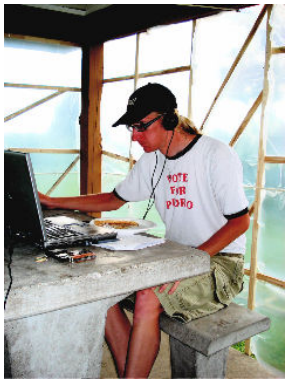
An affiliated club of the American Radio Relay League

Greetings & Very Happy New Year to All!

The January 2008 EIDXA meeting will be held **Friday, January 23rd**, at 7:30 p.m. at Kirkwood Community College in Room 219C. EIDXA will introduce new officers, and the program will feature a report on the T32DAS/T32CXX expedition to Christmas Island, Eastern Kiribati. Glen KØJGH will provide an insider's update on the upcoming DXpedition to much-needed Desecheo Island, KP5. The January 23 meeting provides a good opportunity to pay your 2009 EIDXA dues if you haven't sent them to our club treasurer Rich W3ACO already.

President's Propagation, Pronouncements & Pontifications

— Joe Hetrick KCØVKN, EIDXA President



Everyone 2009 is upon us! I hope that you all found a K3, an IC7800, or the like under tree; at the very least good health!

I'm a relatively new face to the club but am happy to have been roped, I mean graciously asked to serve. Be sure to introduce yourself to me so I can get to know everyone in the club.

I've not been globetrotting like our illustrious VP and his cohort, and hopefully in the upcoming meeting they'll wow us with tales of cannibals, DX Pileups, and what it's like to ride in a tiny plane for several hours.

President's Propagation, Pronouncements & Pontifications

Hopefully our own Glen, KØJGH will be able to let us in on the latest happenings with the upcoming KP5 DXpedition. As I write this there are a few on the air: E44M and ZD8UW spring to mind. I hope everyone's found their way into the log on a new band/ mode before the ops are all home sleeping in their own beds.

I also hope that some members managed to find their way onto 160 after KUØA's excellent program on 160M DXing from a city lot! Reports thus far are that this 160m season has been excellent with reasonably consistent DX activity.

Hope to see you the 23rd. Dit Dit, Joe KCØVKN

Veep Ramblings - Tom Vinson NYØV

Well I leave for a little DXpedition only to return to find that I am now the VP of the EIDXA…choo choo! 8-) Actually, I am happy to take my turn as an officer of the club as I feel I should take my 'turn' at it. So here are some random thoughts….

Be sure to make it to the Jan 23rd meeting as Rod and I will be presenting our DXpedition to T32 pictures. It was a real hoot and we hope to let you in on the fun. If you ask Rod nicely, he may even show some slides on some of the Amelia Earhart artifacts we found on the island while we were scavenging around the beach!

The guys at OH8X have really done it this time….have you seen the pictures of their new 3 element 160m beam? Or did you see the new 5 element 80m beam? Yes, that's right 5 elements on 80. Well read further in this newsletter and you will see the pictures. These guys are crazy!

I hear from KJ9I that he now has his 6m antenna and the 80m vertical back up at his new Wisconsin QTH. Many of you may not know this, but Dave is creeping up on that magic 3000 in the DXCC Challenge. I think he needs like 80 more. That is quite an accomplishment! Keep after them Dave!

Did any of you work the ARRL 10m DX Contest in December? You don't have to worry about staying up all night with no sunspots on that band! I managed to work about 6 hours of it and made 146 Q's and 31 mults. It was interesting to see how the band opened, or not. There were a lot of spots for SA from the southeast W4's…but the furthest SA I worked was XE! Not even an LU. But then on Sunday afternoon, I worked two ZL's that called me. On the other hand I didn't hear any CA, OR, or WA stations. It was like there was an RF wall at the AZ/NV borders. I found the best technique was to turn my antenna to the minimum noise and just start calling. In this way I also worked some back-scatter. All in all, it was still fun, even without the sunspots. I still recall the time when we had sunspots and I was called by S79 during this contest. How the conditions have changed!

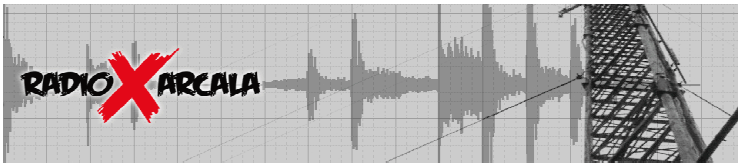
See you on the 23rd! Tom, NYØV

OH8X Guys Go Crazy! - Tom Vinson NYØV

The Finns have gone crazy up in Lapland! It must be the dark days they have now. This year they put up a 3 element 160m beam and a 5 element 80m beam up 100m! These puppies each have 60m booms on them! In the picture you see two dark spots inside the boom of the 160m Yagi on the right. Those are OH8SR and OH6RM working on the antenna! The ring rotor on the tower is big enough to drive a car through!

The 160/80 yagi stack at OH8X ►

◄ OH8SR & OH6RM in boom of 160m Yagi!



You can learn more about OH8X and the station and antennas at **www.radioarkala.com**. Take a few minutes and watch the narrated video describing station OH8X and the antenna farm.

2008 CQWW DX CW – Things To Do While Waiting For 10M To Come Back To Life - Rich Heinrich N0YY

I had the opportunity to be part of Toni's team for this year's annual CQWW CW DX Contest. I participated last year and left quite depressed with the level of performance of 40M from the Midwest. Toni is a strong performer on 160 and 80M with his wide-spaced four squares and has numerous solutions for 20M

For those of you that were part of his station visit last year the antenna systems continue to evolve. The major change this year was a new 40M stack on a new 200 foot tower. Toni now has two fixed stacks of 3 over 3 stack fixed on Europe and to the Southeast as well two rotatable full size 3-elements at 200 feet.

This year promised to be a challenge again with the poor sunspot recovery and the fact that 10M continues to be a quiet band – as in no openings. 15 meters has caught the same "cold" and is anemic in terms of sustained openings.

But Toni always seems to find a way to keep the interest high. This year he had a Skimmer solution as well as new radios to look at and evaluate!

First the Skimmer – In an effort to monitor high band openings in real time, Toni has a Flex-5000 Software Defined Radio acting as a Skimmer solution looking for signals on 10 meters. At

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the same time it was used to monitor other bands to test its overall capabilities in the high transmit interference environment. I was amazed at its overall performance. I can see how it can help a single operator station know when to change bands or to use it to drive band maps. I can now fully appreciate the "ethical" issues of using Skimmer in the Single Operator – Unassisted mode for the contests. Yes it is part of a single station and does not use external capabilities. Yes it still requires the operator to validate the copied call and exchange because of the potential for busted calls. It really does call into question the implications of technology in automating a single operator station.

It was interesting to watch the Skimmer coupled to the Master Call Database "self-correct" the calls to be consistent with valid calls. These could then be used to populate band maps in the popular logging programs like N1MM, WriteLog, etc.

Toni also provided a real time, harsh environmental test bed for a couple of the newest radios. Installed at his station were a new ICOM 7700 and a K3. The contest would provide a great opportunity to use these radios in a highly congested band environment. These radios were used for 160 and 80M at night and on 20 and 15M during the day.

So I'll offer my "opinions" of the two radios.

ICOM 7700 – a large radio with a very detailed CRT based display. Spectrum scope was interesting but more of a distraction than useful during operations. The front panel was loaded with buttons, switches, and knobs. The main controls were the ability to adjust the DSP referenced IF. It was great to be able to select a CW center frequency and then adjust the bottom and top ends of the skirts. The receiver performed well in the harsh environment with no noticeable thumps or images that were apparent only a few years ago.

With that said, the transmit operation was cumbersome in terms of operating split or locking the transmit frequency so that you could tune off a bit during a run. I have grown so accustomed to "two-knob" radios that having to return to holding a button to adjust the transmit frequency and not having a way to easily listen in a "dual" mode was a disadvantage. (Some of this may be real familiarity with the radio. I had to learn on the fly. Toni had the manual near the radio to make sure we could "learn on the fly".)

While the receiver was robust, I'm not sure it would meet my value assessment for the price.

Elecraft K3 – here was an example of a small radio. The short and sweet of it was that it has a great receiver, but the nested functions made operation "difficult". I found the size of the radio a bit of a challenge. I prefer a larger radio with the functions I use spread out. The small size and the rich set of features require that many of the functions must be nested on the limited number of buttons. Again in a shoot out with the ICOM 7700 on the dense, high signal environment of 160M I would assess the K3 outperformed the 7700.

I found the radio a bit difficult to operate but in all fairness, I did not spend more than 20 minutes trying to learn the front panel. Again, Toni had the manual on hand but it was interesting to sit in

2008 CQWW DX CW

front of a tried and true FT-1000MP and watch the "frenzy" of looking in the manual to find out how to make the radio do something.

This radio likely was a much better value based on receiver performance and features, but for me it was too small. If I were buying a radio for DXpeditions this would likely be my choice.

OK – now back to the contest "report."

As we usually do Toni and I sat down prior to the contest and took a shot at predicting the performance on a band by band basis as well as a total score. Toni also asked Alex, KU1CW to predict performance for the weekend. It was interesting to see that both Alex and I came VERY close to predicting the same and actual performance.

We chose the Multi-Single category with one run station. This would optimize the high rate periods during the day (20 and 15M) and would also allow us to band hop between 160M and 80M during the evening while attempting to run 40M. We could also move freely to chase multiplies.

At 0000Z the gun went off with me on 40M in the run mode. As noticed last year, 40M was not be a run band in the early evening. The band was long and this year we had to deal with skewed path operations. (You had to point at 90 degrees to work Northern Europe.) The first night also showed no real JA openings. Performance was way down the first night on 40M. In order to optimize 40M in the early evening Alex and I tried something like the W3LPL "run – multiplier" two radio approach. Using N1MM as the logging program had the advantage of being able to ensure only one station was transmitting at a time. I was running while Alex was Search and Pouncing the multipliers and stations on the band map. That was the only way we could keep a rate at a level of even 60 per hour on 40M during the first three hours. (In contrast, 4 years ago at NØNI the first hour 40M performance was 150 per hour. At PJ2T the 40M performance was 230 Qs in the first hour.)

Saturday morning opened with the traditional 20M opening, but the signals were much weaker than expected – even the strongest Europeans were no more than S5. 15M opened very weak and allowed only a Search and Pounce mode as no real run could get started. This changed later in the day, but the 15M signals were still weak and watery.

We kept a close eye on 10M and logged only 3 QSOs all day on Saturday.

Saturday night was much better on the low bands. We had good run rates on 160 and 80M as well as better paths and openings on 40M. 40M went long early and the first part of the JA run

on 40 started just after midnight and then died about 40 minutes later. We worked more VKs and ZLs in this contest than I can ever remember. At local sunrise, Central Asia, JA, and the rest of the Far East rose out of the noise for almost two hours and we continued to add to our overall totals.

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When the dust settled the results were as follows:

PJ2T 2008 CQWW DX CW Summary			
Band	QSOs	Zones	Countries
160	184	19	71
80	631	31	115
40	480	37	131
20	1194	37	139
15	143	28	80
10	8	6	7
Total	2640	158	543
Total Score = 5,040,891			

It is always fun to complete multi-band DXCC on a single weekend. But it is also depressing to see a band like 15M that typically produces 1000 QSOs to be so thin. The weekend was fun based on the camaraderie and the short thrilling peaks of high run rates (although few and not as high as previous years). I always enjoy operating at a world class station.

The drive home from Perry was thrilling with the first REAL snowfall of the year. I stopped counting at 100 cars in the median on I-80 that slid off the road. Fortunately, I made it home safely.

Closing remarks – Weather played havoc with some of the world class stations a couple of weeks after CQWW DX CW. Matt, KC1XX and Dave, K1TTT lost most of their antennas during the ice storm in the Northeast. This year KC1XX performed near the top of the pile and now faces a massive rebuilding effort. Not many antenna installations can survive 3 inch radial ice. A very sad situation indeed. Pictures of the losses are available on different websites. (Check contesting.com and TowerTalk reflectors for details.)

W3ACO Antennas Thrashed – The Photos - Rich Haendel W3ACO

Last July my 55 foot Tashjian crank-up tower with 3 element Steppir collapsed in a high wind out of a thunderstorm cell. The wind by analysis was calculated to be 115 MPH. Attached are two pictures of the result. I still don't have the new tower up yet. But I do have the replacement SteppIR ready to go.

W3ACO Antennas Thrashed

Fortunately I was not in my shack (next to the broken tower) when the storm blew through. And remarkably, the building was not even scratched!

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See you Friday January 23rd
7:30 PM in Room 219C Kirkwood Comm. College
Pizza afterward!

2009 EIDXA Meeting Schedule

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

Next Meeting

January 23 – 7:30 p.m., Kirkwood Community College, Room 219C.

- New officers will be introduced.
- T32DAS & T32CXX will be discussing their recent DXpedition to Christmas Island, Eastern Kiribati.
- Glen KØJGH will provide an update on the upcoming DXpedition to Desecheo Island (KP5). Glen will be among the first ops to activate KP5 pursuant to government authorization 10+ years.

Please Submit Your Annual EIDXA Dues

Your 2009 EIDXA membership fee is now due. It's still only $5 which is a great bargain for the benefits of membership, which include the club meetings and post-meeting gatherings, informative club newsletter and programs, the NØDX repeater, e-mail reflector and the advice and guidance from our many experienced members on things like equipment, antennas and operating!

Please send your $5 dues today to:

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EIDXA Treasurer
402 McLean St.
Iowa City, IA 52246

Thank you!