Eastern Iowa DX Association

An ARRL affiliated club - Established 1975

In this issue

July 2020

Club Officers:

<u>President:</u>
Jim Spencer WØSR

<u>Vice President:</u>

President's Propagation, Pontifications and Prognostics

Coronavirus and the EIDXA

In April's column I talked about how the Coronavirus was impacting amateur radio. By then we were seeing big changes with canceled DXpeditions and major conventions like Visalia and the Hamvention. We canceled one EIDXA meeting and even stopped holding EIDXA Romeo (Retired Old Men Eating Out) lunches. There seemed to be much that was unknown about Covid-19 but it was clear that it was something requiring extra care with old timers, a large part of our membership. Soon the access to the meeting rooms at Mercy Hospital were denied and restaurants were closed except for carryout's. Although the Iowa restrictions have been reduced some, possibly too soon, we still have restaurants and Mercy closed.

In the March-April timeframe there was talk of the worst being over by June, even some said earlier. I thought the end of summer was more realistic. Now in early July with new cases near the earlier peak, it is clear that the end of summer is way too optimistic. Another year or so might be more realistic. We know that Mercy Hospital will not let us in until things are well

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under control. It is like Fort Knox there now and they do not want Covid-19 running around the halls.

So what should the EIDXA do? It has been suggested before that we hold our meetings on Zoom until the virus calms down. I looked into that earlier and asked a few if we should give it a try. It seemed that if we could get back in Mercy in September we should just wait but I think now that option will never happen.

What ideas do you have on possible approaches? Should we just wait? Should we go to Zoom meetings? Note: The ARRL has Zoom licensees we can use to hold our meetings eliminating costs to the EIDXA. Should we risk an outdoor picnic? Or a Zoom picnic? What about a Zoom Romeo? I've been participating in Zoom church meetings and meetings of various organizations via Zoom and it really works very well.

Please send me an email (jlscr2@yahoo.com) telling me what you think we should do. I'll work with the officers and look over your inputs and see if we can come up with a plan. Thanks in advance.

73, Jim WØSR

Musings from the lunatic fringe

Bob WØGXA

2020 is shaping up to be one for the record books. Virus, murder hornets, aggressive rats, glacier mice...

I have my "work from home office" set up in the shack and after working in there all day, the last thing I want to do is sit in there on the radio!

COVID-19 has likely touched nearly every part of your life. Hamfests are the obvious victims. A few events are moving to a virtual format for this year and next. Whether these become permanent formats, only time will tell. Since it seems likely we won't see a vaccine developed and administered in any material quantity before 2023, we'll have a few years of this.

Hopefully you've been using your time to get on the air.

Sunspots would be something that would brighten all our days!

While we hope for better days ahead, check this out....

QSO Today Virtual Ham Expo
8-9 August 2020

Club News and Administrative Items

NEXT MEETING

CANCELLED

UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

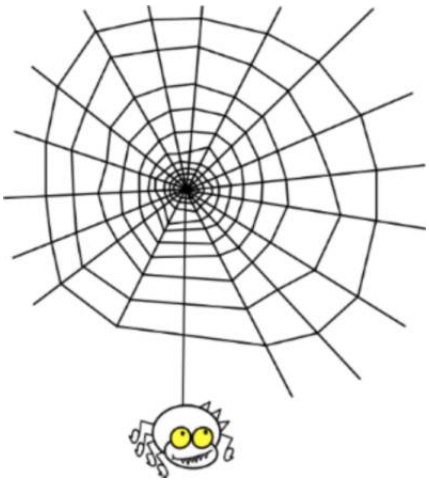
Card Checkers

We have three club members who can check your QSL cards

- Tom, WB8ZRL
- Glenn, WØGJ
- Mike, NA9Q

Contact info can be found here: http://www.arrl.org/dxcc-card-checker-search

Member Spotlight



Nothing to report this month. If you haven't been featured in the newsletter, let me know. We'd love to do a story.

DX News

Introduction to the South Orkney Islands

By Gene Spinelli K5GS and Dave Lloyd K3EL

The VP8PJ DXpedition Report is provided as a courtesy to sponsoring clubs and is published here with permission. - Ed.

The South Orkney Islands group is located in the Southern Ocean, some 600 km (375 mi) north-east of the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula and 1,400 km (850 mi) south-west of Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America. The islands have a total area of about 620 square kilometers (240 sq. mi). The largest island, Coronation, is mountainous with peaks rising to nearly 1,300 m above sea level and is mostly covered by glaciers. We operated from the smaller Signy Island which is also rugged and glaciated, its highest point rising to around 290 m. The ground is generally rocky, with the little vegetation comprising mainly of mosses. The temperature is moderated due to the surrounding ocean; however, the South Orkneys are buffeted by strong winds and receive much rain and snow throughout the summer.

Figure 1 South Orkney Islands Location

The islands are claimed both by Britain and by Argentina, but since they are within Antarctic Treaty territory such claims are now held in

abeyance. Britain and Argentina both maintain bases on the islands. The British Antarctic Survey base, Signy Research Station, was established in 1947. Initially operated year-round, it is now open only from November to April each year (southern hemisphere summer). Our operating location was approximately 1 km from Signy Research Station. The permanent residents of the South Orkneys include Antarctic fur seals, elephant seals, three different penguin species and various nesting species of sea birds.

Planning and Preparation

Shortly after the very successful VP6D Ducie Island 2018 DXpedition, members of the Perseverance DX Group (PDXG) identified several possible entities for our next project. All were remote islands, so we contacted Nigel Jolly K6NRJ, owner of the RV Braveheart, inquiring about Braveheart's availability for the listed entities with South Orkney being one of them.

Nigel's reply was positive for a South Orkney Islands project. He outlined his commercial project schedule for August, 2019 through April, 2020 which included the VP6R Pitcairn Island DXpedition in October, 2019, several diving contracts, and a January, 2020 project near the Falkland Islands. Nigel wrote that he could pick up a radio team in Punta Arenas, Chile on February 15th, take us to Signy Island for a two-week DXpedition, and return the team to Chile on March 12th. After reviewing his proposed contract and pricing we accepted the proposal. Braveheart and Nigel have a long history of providing outstanding support to the DXpedition community; Nigel's son Matt was the skipper for this project.

The South Orkneys proved to be a popular choice and our on-island team was quickly named. Our international team comprised: Dave K3EL, Les W2LK, Gene K5GS as Team Leader and Co Team Leaders, respectively, Heye DJ9RR, Mike WA6O, Vadym UT6UD, Steve W1SRD, Walt N6XG, Laci HAØNAR, Ken NG2H, Arliss W7XU, Rob N7QT, Hans-Peter HB9BXE and Alan VK6CQ. Many of the team members knew one another from previous PDXG or other DXpeditions or had met at ham radio events. We knew there would be significant interest from the DX community since the South Orkneys' most recent major DXpedition was VP8ORK in 2011, nine years previous to our proposed date. Anyone licensed or taking up DXing since 2011 would need VP8O and they would now have an opportunity for a contact.

Figure 2 VP8PJ Team at Punta Arenas (Photo K3EL)

In preparing for the expedition we held several pre-expedition planning teleconferences. Topics included living on the island, antenna planning, operator scheduling, travel planning, permitting and licensing. The detailed plans were documented in the VP8PJ Operations Manual and shared with everyone prior to departure.

Operating from any Antarctic location is a challenge because even during the Austral summer bad weather can be expected. An early priority in planning was to identify shelters that would stand up to the expected weather conditions so that the team could operate safely and effectively. We were able to secure two WeatherPort portable buildings with which we established a single campsite on the island. A separate smaller tent contained a toilet. One building housed the radio equipment with seven operating positions as well as a small camp kitchen in which we could reheat prepared food brought daily from the Braveheart. The other was equipped with 14 bunks for sleeping. Detailed layouts of the tents were prepared prior to departure to make sure everything we needed would fit and to facilitate setup on arrival.

Figure 3 VP8PJ Campsite (W7XU Photo)

We were concerned about the weight of material that we had to transport and the time it would take to put up the shelters. To address these issues, we designed and built a prefabricated floor system using plywood sheets supported on metal construction studs. The plywood was cut into sheets that were small enough for one person to handle in windy conditions. These would be laid down next to each other and joined together to form a solid floor. Several team members traveled to California in the summer of 2019 to prepare the WeatherPort buildings and prefabricate the floor. We decided to operate from the same site that VP8ORK used, near Waterpipe Beach on the eastern side of Signy Island. This site has a sheltered anchorage, and the camp location slightly inland is protected from the worst of the wind by several low rocky knolls immediately surrounding the camp.

Figure 4 Prefabricated floor (NG3H Photo)

The island is well-positioned for propagation to Europe (EU) and North America (NA), however the location of our camp with hills immediately to the north and east made the take-off for NA less favorable than that to EU, which is straight over water. Asia (AS) and much of Oceania (OC) are challenging from the South Orkneys with a path over the South Pole. Both South America (SA) and Africa (AF) are relatively close with excellent propagation much of the time. These considerations were key design factors for the expedition. At the bottom of the solar cycle, only a few bands would be open at any one time so the antenna plan and station design were developed to address propagation and paths, allowing two or more stations to operate simultaneously on the most active bands. Much of the antenna preparation work was performed by Walt N6XG and Steve W1SRD. Several team members met in California to help consolidate, assemble, test and pack antennas and equipment for sea shipment.

The South Orkney Islands are located at, and below, 60 degrees south, which places them under the Antarctic Treaty System. A DXpedition is considered a tourist activity which is permitted under the Antarctic Treaty, but requires an environmental assessment and a waste permit, issued by a signatory country of the Antarctic Treaty System. Being an American led project, we interacted with the US Department of State (Polar Affairs), the National Science Foundation and the Environmental Protection Agency. The permit process took about 8 months from start to finish. We had input from Ralph K0IR, who managed the process for VP8ORK. The various agencies were helpful throughout the process, and keenly focused on their mission of protecting the environment in accord with the provisions of the Antarctic Treaty. We created two detailed documents that answered many questions about the project including explanations of our intended activities, and of the capabilities of the Braveheart. While a travel visa is not required to visit Antarctica, each team member was responsible to ensure he had the proper documents to enter Chile.

The radio license and call sign proved to be surprisingly elusive. Previous DXpeditions to the South Orkneys applied and received the license/call sign from the Falkland Islands telecommunications authority. We were unable to get a license from the Falkland Islands; while we were organizing the expedition the Falklands telecommunications authority was being restructured and their licensing process was temporarily suspended. After a conference call with the ARRL we decided to use VP8/VP8DXU. Team member Arliss W7XU was the holder of VP8DXU, so it made sense to use his call. Subsequently, Alan VK6CQ joined the team. Alan held VP8PJ issued during his working years in Antarctica. His license was specifically issued for the British Antarctic Territories, which include the South Orkney Islands, so it was an easy decision to change to this call. Using the shorter call sign was applauded by the DX community.

Travel and Set-Up

The team met in Punta Arenas, a popular transit point for visitors to Antarctica and Patagonia.

We spent a few days buying last minute items, including a three-day supply of emergency food should the weather make replenishment from the Braveheart impossible. We enjoyed a visit with members of the Radio Club of Punta Arenas, CE8RPA, and took in the sights.

On February 14th our equipment was loaded aboard Braveheart. We departed Punta Arenas on February 15th for the planned six-day transit to Signy Island. A Garmin inReach personal locator allowed

many of you (and our families) to follow our progress across the South Atlantic and the Southern Ocean. The seas were reasonably calm and the winds helpful. About a day away from Signy we started seeing ice, and for the last night the vessel proceeded very slowly while keeping extra watch for the smaller bergs that might not be seen on radar yet may be capable of putting a hole in the ship. We arrived at Signy earlier than planned but were disappointed to find access to our intended landing spot blocked by upwards of 100 m of pack ice. The skipper and team members investigated the extent of the ice and concluded it would be too dangerous to land people and equipment. Alternative landing sites were evaluated, and we contacted the staff at Signy Research Station to tap into their local knowledge. They told us that the ice had blown in the night before, and a change in wind direction was expected that evening which would likely move the ice out. The next morning the ice was dispersed enough to begin ferrying people and equipment to the island using an aluminum hulled boat especially constructed to operate around ice.

Figure 5 Pack ice along shore line (K3EL Photo)

The radio and campsite equipment were ferried ashore. Being relatively late in the season, there were very few fur seals at our landing site on Waterpipe Beach so we were able to transfer equipment across the slippery, rocky foreshore. The Braveheart crew and the radio team moved the equipment approximately 300 meters up a steep and rugged slope to the camp location. A second location was used for landing of personnel, by stepping out of the boat onto boulders and then climbing up rocks to reach the campsite path. To facilitate this landing the crew constructed a temporary ladder that was removed at the end of the project.

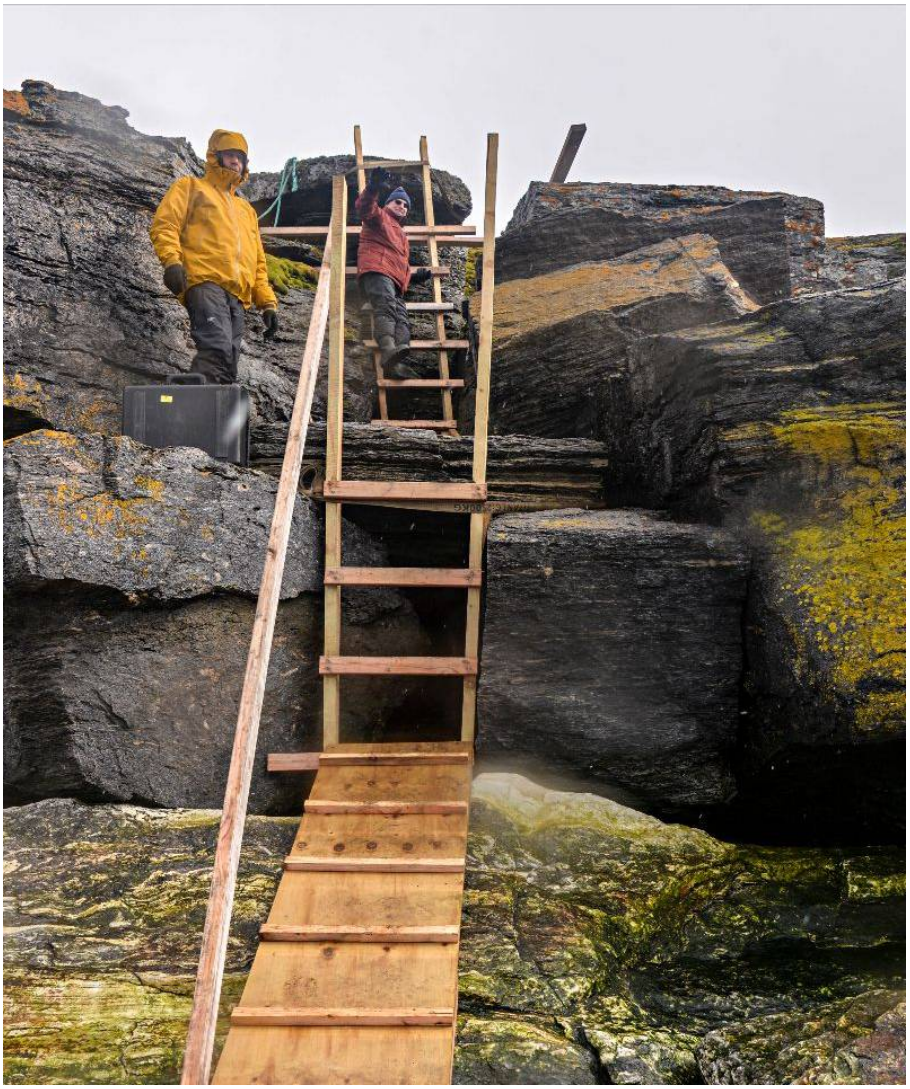


Figure 6 L-R Dave K3EL - Gene K5GS (W7XU Photo)

The first priority was to establish shelter, and the prefabricated tent flooring was placed on the ground and the buildings erected. This was followed by parallel workstreams of antenna construction, equipment setup, and furnishing of the sleeping and operating tents.

Signy Island is mountainous, with many hills and very rocky and uneven ground. One had to be careful when walking as losing one's footing could be dangerous. Being outside could be hazardous since the weather was cold and windy, with rain and snow most days, and very little sunshine. The temperature hovered around freezing most of the time, and the wind and precipitation made it feel colder. Assembling antennas and anything else with small pieces of hardware was difficult in the harsh climate.

Meals were taken on the island. Breakfast foods were stored on the island and regularly replenished by Braveheart. Weather permitting, each day two hot meals were brought ashore. Except for an occasional trip back to the ship for a shower and a warm bed everyone stayed on the island for the duration of the DXpedition.

We were well-supported by manufacturers and distributors of amateur radio equipment: Elecraft loaned eight K3s transceivers, KPA-500 amplifiers, P3 panadapters, KAT-500 tuners and a KPA-1500 amplifier; DX Engineering donated coax, connectors, tools, antenna parts and accessories; WiMo (Europe) donated two triband and two WARC band Moxon antennas. Spiderbeam provided a substantial discount on the telescoping masts and Arlan Communications loaned (and later discounted) their RadioSport headsets. Low Band Systems discounted high power band pass filters which were a great help in reducing interstation interference. The DX Store and ON5UR QSL Print Services subsidized QSL card production. Inmarsat Government donated communications equipment and services. Mastrant and Clamcleat each donated guying ropes and fittings. The generosity of these manufacturers and distributors is greatly appreciated.

Team members provided SPE and OM Power amplifiers. Logging computers were Lenovo X-230 laptops belonging to PDXG. Many of the Pelican and other shipping cases were loaned by Paul N6PSE (Intrepid DX Group) and Jim K8JRK, while others came from the team.

The antennas included: two EAntenna triband Moxons, two EAntenna 12/17 WARC Moxon antennas, verticals on 60, 80 and 160, four squares on 30 and 40, a dipole for 40, and VDAs for HF. The high wind conditions proved to be a challenge for the verticals, with regular maintenance required to keep them up; better guying using stakes rather than attachment to surface rocks improved wind survival. The Moxons were situated on the Marble Knolls, low rocky ridges that surrounded our camp. This gave them enhanced effective height above. The EAntennas and Spiderbeam aluminum masts withstood the rigors of Antarctica and performed well in this exposed location.

Figure 7 Moxon and Vertical Antennas (W7XU Photo)

The terrain and location of our campsite prevented us from having internet access from the island; we were too close to the mountains to the north. Braveheart was just far enough away from the mountains to get a signal but the weather conditions made the landing too hazards for us to go back to the ship every day. We kept in contact with the Pilot team using our Garmin inReach's texting capability, not perfect for long detailed reporting, but good enough to pass pilot reports. When back on the ship we used our Inmarsat satellite phone for voice calls to home and to the chief pilot, Glenn KE4KY, and the Inmarsat BGAN to upload logs and exchange emails with the pilot and support teams.

Radio Operations

The first contact was made on 40m CW with DL2HRF on 22 February and the final contact was on 30m CW with WA6RRI on 6 March. A few minutes after the first QSO was logged two additional stations came on line. The next morning, the team continued antenna and campsite buildout and by the end of that day most stations were operational. We were delighted to find good propagation and reasonably strong signals to many parts of the world, with EU being the best. Later into the expedition conditions dropped off a little, but overall, we had few complaints about propagation.

During periods of good propagation all seven operating positions were in action. As high-bands propagation waned during the night SSB usually dropped out first. The SSB operations would shift to FT8, where a single operator could handle multiple FT8 stations simultaneously. The radio operations plan included a rack of high-power bandpass filters manufactured by Low Band Systems. Even

with our Moxon and vertical antennas in close proximity to one another the combination of Elecraft radios and LBS filters proved to be very effective and we had very little interstation interference.

Figure 8 All Stations Operational (NG2H Photo)

An important aspect of VP8PJ planning was operator scheduling. We used a similar plan to the one that was used on Ducie Island, VP6D. For each four-hour shift operators were scheduled on four or five stations, depending on expected band activity, with the remaining stations available for any other team member to use. The scheduled operators worked under a designated shift captain who decided which bands/modes had priority during their operating shift. Operators using an open station could choose to do whatever they wanted so long as the band/mode was not already occupied by a scheduled operator since the scheduled operator always had priority. This process ensured that all team members had a sufficient amount of operating time, while providing an opportunity for extra time on-the-air for those who wanted more radio time. Every few days each of the three radio teams would move their start time by four hours, thus over the project's duration each team experienced different geographic openings and band conditions.

After the WSJT-X (RR73) machine generated dupes were removed, the QSO count was 83,782. Thousands of these duplicate QSOs were removed by the PDXG Log Search/OQRS software. The application looks at each FT8 contact and deletes subsequent QSOs for that call sign within a two minute window of the first QSO, i.e. the machine generated duplicate QSO(s).

QSO distribution was: EU 52.7%, NA 34.8%, AS 6.4%, SA 4.5% and AF/ OC 1.6%, with 20,523 unique call signs and 168 DXCC entities, see Figure 9 for additional details.

We had 773 “Not in Log” (busted call) inquires, which is a very small number for 83,782 QSOs. This was a good indication that the VP8PJ operators paid close attention to logging accuracy. However, there were a few pirates operating and unfortunately some claimed QSOs were for dates, times and/or bands when we were operating elsewhere or off the air.

Each morning we’d look at the N1MM+ graphs and see that we were making between 5,500 QSOs per day from the first full day of operating to 9,200 QSOs per day on the best operating day. Considering the propagation and less than perfect paths, signals from all over the world were good. Pilot reports and over the air reports indicated we were being heard without too much difficulty on most bands, and even 10 and 12 opened a few times. We used WSJT-X software version (2.2.0) with the fox/hound operating mode and most callers understood the FT8 operating protocol. However, some callers didn’t get the message straight away and were calling below 1,000 Hz. This improved as more people got the hang of fox/hound operation.

As with VP6D, it was interesting to see the popularity of FT8 not just amongst the callers, but also with the DXpedition operators; perhaps the chance to remove the headphones and relax was a welcome break from the adrenaline rush of working a pileup on the other modes.

BAND/MODE	CW	FT8	RTTY	SSB	TOTAL QSO	TOTAL %
160 m	1232	828	0	0	2060	2.46 %
80 m	2515	2563	0	190	5268	6.29 %
60 m	0	1559	0	0	1559	1.86 %
40 m	6824	5704	14	1979	14521	17.33 %
30 m	8799	5226	737	0	14762	17.62 %
20 m	8396	3534	1232	5762	18924	22.59 %
17 m	6920	4985	417	4719	17041	20.34 %
15 m	4089	1925	40	1351	7405	8.84 %
12 m	1083	595	0	46	1724	2.06 %
10 m	285	233	0	0	518	0.62 %
TOTAL QSO	40143	27152	2440	14047	83782	100 %
TOTAL %	47.91 %	32.41 %	2.91 %	16.77 %	100 %	

Figure 9 Band - Mode Statistics

During the voyage to Signy Island we operated as ZL1NA/MM and also had a WSPR station operating as VP8PJ.

Departure

A DXpedition team needs to create a departure plan. It begins by merging the team’s plan into the skipper’s departure schedule, and

removing non essential equipment from the island as soon as we determined what was not needed. Antennas will gradually be removed, stations disassembled and packed for shipment. This process typically begins about three days before the planned departure date, but of course the actual departure will depend on weather and sea conditions. The skipper was providing regular weather forecasts, and the day before our planned shutdown, he told us we would have one more day to operate.

The tides and sea conditions would be more favorable if we left on the morning of March 7th. Also, an early morning departure would give us better visibility in navigating the ice fields as we departed. This new schedule meant we would have a final day of very intense activity, taking down the remaining antennas, equipment, and tents, transporting everything to the shore and transferring it to the Braveheart. By the afternoon of March 6th much of the equipment was staged on Waterpipe Beach, and we were revitalized with a cup of hot soup near the beach. Then three team members went back to the ship to assist the crew with stowing equipment as it came back from the island, while the remainder of the team transferred equipment down the beach and through the waves to the small boat which made multiple trips between the beach and the Braveheart. This required several team members wearing waders to stand in the very cold water for several hours. With everything properly stowed and a walkaround to ensure nothing was left on the island, the remaining team and crew returned to the ship.

Figure 10 Waterpipe Beach Staging Area (K3EL Photo)

The return to Punta Arenas was uneventful. With following seas, we

arrived sooner than expected. We were greeted in Punta Arenas by immigration and customs officials, a health inspector and our customs broker. After several hours of formalities, we were permitted to leave the ship and our equipment was transferred to the customs broker.

Reflections

Once back in Punta Arenas we became fully aware of the worldwide Covid19 crisis. Team members had previously booked return flights between March 13 – 17. Several of them rebooked for an earlier departure.

With time to relax we looked back over the past several weeks. Very few people in the world get to walk on Antarctica, even fewer are permitted to camp overnight. The consensus was that VP8PJ had been a successful expedition for the island participants. We hope it was a good experience for those of you chasing us in the pileups. We enjoyed hearing from people who contacted us, be they a mega-station looking for a full house, or a QRP operator needing an ATNO. A consistent theme from many who wrote was they had “fun” working VP8PJ, and we had fun working you.

We set up a Groups.io reflector prior to departure, many of your comments were summarized by the pilots and forwarded to us. Other island activities included collecting marine sediment samples for scientific research and partnering with several schools to supplement STEM education through classroom presentations about the expedition.

One of the most meaningful comments on the reflector was written by John Miller K6MM, President of the Northern California DX Foundation, addressed to Chief Pilot Glenn KE4KY: “Kudos to both the on-island team, and to you and the other members of the off-island team. VP8PJ has been one of the most well-run DXpeditions in the last decade “

Wrap Up

We would like to acknowledge the help and support of many groups and individuals who contributed to South Orkney Islands 2020. We appreciate the major financial sponsorship from the Northern California DX Foundation (NCDXF), the German DX Foundation (GDXF), The American Radio Relay League Colvin Award, Clipperton DX Club and the Far East DX-ploiters for their very generous support, and that of the many other clubs and foundations. Please review the list of Corporate and Club/Foundation sponsors at sorkney.com, they

deserve your support.

Over 1,700 individual donations were processed via the website, including 103 Premier Donors (contributing $200, or more) and over 1,600 DXers added a contribution to their OQRS confirmation request. The on-island team were supported by many individuals, and in particular we would like to recognize our Chief Pilot Glenn, KE4KY, and his pilot team of: Mason KM4SII, Cesar PY2YP, Bjorn ON9CFG, Alex 4L5A, Andre V51B, Hiro JA1WSX and Luke VK3HJ.

Managing the early donor program was Doris K0BEE, and Tim M0URX who processes your QSL confirmations and uploads your LoTW confirmations.

Among the highlights of the project were giving many DXers an ATNO and/or band fills, putting people on the Honor Roll, logging thousands of FT8 contacts, the first 60-meter operation from Signy Island, and working with a fantastic team of amateur radio operators.

We must also recognize Matt Jolly and his Braveheart crew who were as much a part of the project's success as the radio team.

Until the next time, thank you for your interest in VP8PJ South Orkney Islands 2020.

Visalia DX Convention to be Two Virtual Events in 2021

06/16/2020 *from ARRL.org*

It will be a Virtual Visalia in 2021. Organizers announced this week that the newly renamed International DX and Contesting Convention (**IDXCC**) in Visalia, California, will span two weekends next April, providing a "choice of two Vs." Each will be a "unique 3-day event" without duplication. Registration will begin early next year. The former International DX Convention was canceled in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Visalia sponsors said the event's new name better reflects what the convention had become over the years — a gathering of both avid DXers and contesters from around the US and the world. Sponsors said the challenge for planning next year's event was whether to prepare for an in-person convention or a virtual gathering.

"Everyone wants to hold out hope for a face-to-face meeting next year,

but we have to ask, ‘What will our new normal lifestyle be like next April, and can we guarantee a COVID-free environment for our attendees?’” an announcement on the IDXCC website explained. “After consultation with a few medical experts, epidemiologists, and longtime attendees of IDXCC, we have concluded that for 2021, the right choice — and the safest choice — is to have a virtual convention instead of an in-person meeting.”

Visalia Part 1 will take place on April 16 – 18, 2021, and Part 2 on April 23 – 25. The program will include forums, technical talks, DXpedition reports, and award presentations. The 2021 Virtual Visalia will offer a contest academy, DX University, hands-on demonstrations, webinars by exhibitors and special guests, a “chaotic eyeball QSO hour,” “dinners without dinner,” banquet-style gatherings for Islands on the Air (IOTA), Top Band, and contesting, and prize raffles.

“Just think: Whether you’re an old-timer or newcomer, you can have a safe, front-row seat at the first-ever Virtual DX and Contesting Convention next April without leaving [home],” organizers said. “The 2021 IDXCC Convention Committee will work hard to make this a memorable one.”

Visalia 2021 co-chairs John Miller, K6MM, and Rich Seifert, KE1B, invite questions and suggestions via **email**.

Visalia DX Convention 2021 - Social Gathering

06-21-2020

Some of us attend the Visalia DX Convention in great measure to socialize with close friends, hams that we work on the air, and potential new friends. Some of us feel that this in-person socialization is an important part of our radio lives.

The planned 2021 Internet convention is missing the in-person socialization, and the smaller social gathering is planned to fill that void.

The social gathering is not organized to compete with the main convention, but to augment it. The event's date was selected to not conflict with the main event.

Social Gathering Details

As announced previously, a **Visalia DX and Contesting Social Gathering** is planned for March 19, 20, and 21 at the Visalia,

California, Wyndham Hotel (refurbished former Holiday Inn,).

Health Concerns

None of us are interested in contracting the Covid-19 virus, nor are we interested in anyone else contracting it at the event. We are uncertain about what impact the virus will be having ten months from now. We may cancel the event. We may cancel the event very close to the planned date if health concerns warrant it.

We expect to know considerably more about how society is faring as we approach the date. Radio-convention wise, Quartzfest, Orlando, and Yuma will have recently either functioned or have been cancelled, and that will impact our planning.

If the event happens, we don't know whether we will try to require masks, enhanced social distancing, diver's helmets with oxygen tanks, or what. At present, I don't expect to be shaking hands with anyone.

Overall Philosophy

Rather than have any particular clubs involved, Jim Neiger, N6TJ, and I decided to run the gathering as two individuals. This permits rapid reaction to whatever the future holds. Note that I was the Convention Chairman, when the DX Convention was first moved to Visalia in 1978, and where we had a two-person convention committee. We have the experience to make this event function smoothly.

Our intent is to keep the event as simple as possible. We do not expect to make money. In fact, we hope to not handle any money. The exact procedure for paying for the dinners is presently undefined, but we are working to somehow have attendees pay the hotel directly.

We expect that there will be no raffles, no prizes, no programs, no registration packets, no patches, no reserved seating, and probably no something-elses.

We expect that this event will be smaller than previous Visalias, and smaller than the main Internet event as well.

There will probably be an organized ARRL discussion, maybe some sort of organized contest discussion and/or DX discussion, and maybe a presentation or two on some sort of operation such as an expedition. Major DX-pedition presentations should be left for the main Internet event. The format of the discussions will be in some way dependent on the number of attendees present. These may be round table

discussions or larger forums. We have been given use of the hotels meeting rooms. Any agenda will likely be finalized in the week before the event. If you have something you feel would be of interest that you can present or lead, please let us know.

If an ARRL or CQ Magazine QSL-card Checker shows up, there may be QSL checking, something probably not expected over the Internet.

The major activity is expected to be talking with each other, in a safe way. We will encourage getting to know people that you do not know well.

Exhibitors

We have received inquiries regarding exhibitors. The current plan is to suggest that anyone wanting to exhibit products simply rent one of the first-floor rooms that face hallways or other public areas, like we did 30 or 40 years ago. As we get closer, we will know the expected attendance, and whether the event merits exhibitors.

Volunteers

Some of you have volunteered to help. Let's see what is needed as we proceed.

Hotel

The Wyndham Hotel appears to be very desirous of our business, and is working hard to make this work. A reduced hotel rate of $95 per night for one or two beds has been negotiated. The rate applies for Friday night, March 19, and Saturday night, March 20. A smaller number of rooms is also available for Thursday night, March 18.Reservations may be cancelled up until one day before.

Call (559) 651-5000, Group code: 031 821 CAL. Group name: California DX Club.

Parking is free.

Motorhome parking is free, but if hookup is needed, expect a small cost.

Expenses

We are endeavoring to run this without cost, but if we end up buying a bunch of cans of soda, we can probably live eating the expense.

Otherwise, there may be a donation jar.

From You

If think you will attend, please let Jim know at n6tj@sbcglobal.net . If you have a probability of attending, such as 50%, please add that information.

Make your cancellable reservations directly with the hotel.

Show up. Bring adequate funds to pay for whatever you eat and drink.

Talk to your friends, safely.

Keep in mind that the event is 10 months away, and will not happen if conditions are not safe. Suggest not buying non-refundable airline tickets.

73,

Dick Norton, N6AA, Co-organizer, with Jim Neiger, N6TJ, Co-organizer

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Feature Articles

First Remote Amateur License Exam

(Source: Southgate ARC)

The first remote all-online amateur radio Technician license exam was carried out in the United States on March 26, 2020

Marcel Stieber @AI6MS Tweeted:

Yesterday [March 26], our working group ran an “all-virtual” amateur radio technician license exam for the first time in history! Thanks to @W5YI for being supportive of this effort. Stay tuned, we hope to have a scalable solution available for broader use soon!
https://twitter.com/AI6MS/status/1243772831415988225

Joseph Talbot sat the exam and his FCC Technician license callsign KJ7NNU was granted on March 27. His entry in the FCC database can be seen at
https://wireless2.fcc.gov/UlsApp/UlsSearch/license.jsp?licKey=4267101

Since 2010 there have been other exams sessions carried out remotely but they have had an in-person proctor present at the exam session. This was the first remote online Technician exam session carried out with everybody online.

On March 15 Sam Hulick had tweeted Ajit Pai, Chairman of the USA’s communications regulator FCC, asking:

Please open up amateur radio exams/licensing remotely. People should not be attending physical classes to be able to obtain a license.
https://twitter.com/SamHulick/status/1239259361932906497

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai speedily tweeted his reply just **14 minutes** later
Thanks for the suggestion. Let me look into this—stay tuned
https://twitter.com/AjitPaiFCC/status/1239262974939971585

On March 24 Stirling Mann @N0SSC reported Remote Testing Working Group Underway
http://n0ssc.com/posts/1044-anchorage-vec-remote-testing-results-in-a-new-extra-remote-testing-working-group-underway

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Something to do when you're bored...

Scott Tilley, VE7TIL, finds long lost satellite... click here.

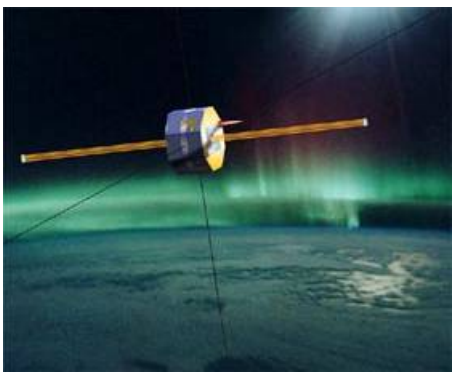


IMAGE (**Imager for Magnetopause-to-Aurora Global Exploration**)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IMAGE_(spacecraft)

Jurassic Journal

- A look back in time -

Tom Vavra WB8ZRL

DX activity from twenty years ago, the Summer quarter of 2000.

From my log:

FR/T - The Lyon DX Group DXpedition to Tromelin, FR/F6KDF/t, by Gil/F5NOD, Eric/F5PXT, Larry/F5PYI and Erwann/F6JJX was all

bands 160-6. The two week operation netted 51,500 QSOs (17,000 CW, 33,800 SSB and 580 RTTY).

KH5 - While planing a Kingman Reef DXpedition for October, Mike, KH6ND was QRV from Palmyra signing /KH5. He was QRV most nights, primarily on CW, and logged some 10,000 QSOs. Mike had problems on 160 metres and, while working on the antenna, he was bitten by a brown scorpion.

S9 - Pete, SV8CRI was active for several weeks as S92SV from Sao Tome until early September.

FO - Mike, KM9D started as FOØMOT from the Gambier Islands, French Polynesia. He later moved to Austral Islands, signing FOØMOT/p for ten days, mostly cw.

5V7VJ & 9G5VJ - Andy, G4ZVJ made 15083 CW QSOs (including over 1000 QSOs on 80 metres) as 5V7VJ during a 7 day operation from Lome, Togo. 1140 CW QSOs were made as 9G5VJ from Accra, Ghana.

T88 - JH7IMX/K7WD was QRV as T88SW from Palau between Sep 21-24, primarily for the CQ WW RTTY contest. Activity before contest was CW and SSB.

VKØ - Alan, VKØMM was active from 1st January to 17th December 2000 to commemorate the Millenium year at Macquarie Island while stationed on the Island as a member of the 2000 Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition (ANARE).

Additional activity:

3W - 3W2LWS was the call Hans, WA1LWS used from Vietnam during the month of July. He has been granted permission to operate on 10, 15 and 20 meters only.

9G - Sergei, UA3AP signed 9G5AP from Ghana during his short visit. He was able to use the local radio club station.

ZD9 - The call ZD9ZM was issued to Bob, G3ZEM for his three week operation from Tristan da Cunha. Bob is a CW operator. His attempt to make low-band QSOs was severely hampered by antenna problems and lightning storms. Bob's final log: (20,538 QSOs: 17156 CW, 2134 SSB, 1248 RTTY).

9MØ - A group of operators from FEDXP (Far East DX Ploiters) activated 9MØF from the Layan Layan, Spratly Islands for 6 days. Log details:

BAND	CW	SSB	RTTY	FM	TOTAL	DXCC
160	84				84	5
80	113	226			339	24
40	1,548	311			1,859	60
30	527				527	41
20	523	996	101		1,620	76
17	1,544	1,165			2,709	72
15	1,168	999	93		2,260	60
12	917	455			1,372	52
10	662	675		2	1,339	56
6	873	933			1,806	8
TOTAL	7,959	5,760	194	2	13,915	108

D6 - RSGB President Don Beattie, G3OZF, signed D68/G3OZF from the Comoros Islands for one week. This was a reconnaissance trip for a major DXpedition that will to take place in February 2001. The D68C dxpedition made over 168K QSOs.

YI - Rodger, GØTLC was in Baghdad for a few days and operated from the club station YI1BGD. After many years of no ham activity, Iraq allowed this club station to operate in the late 1970s. What a mess that pileup was.

Jumping ahead ten years, to the Summer of 2010.

Propagation numbers for the Summer of 2010 showed SFI ranging from 72 to 91, and the A-Index between 0 and 31

Entries from my log:

VP8 - Bob, VP8LP, was worked from the Falklands. Bob has always been very active, but he has stopped verifying QSOs through LoTW.

JT - JT5DX, the JT1CO contest station, was very active in the All Asian contest.

W6S - Glen, KØJGH was the operator for this rare DX, I think during a

Route 66 Operation on the Air.

While my log was kind of sparse, there were other things happening:

PJ7 - Craig, K9CT, was in the middle of planning to activate a new DXCC entity on 10/10/10. PJ7E on St Maarten handed out 75K new ones to the deserving.

3B9 - IZ4AKS signed 3B9/ from Rodrigues. Only holiday style, but 3800 QSOs in the log.

XU - XU7ATM was Laurent F8ATM. Just SSB and RTTY, no cw, but he worked 3470.

XV - Mal, VK6LC, made his (almost) annual trip to Viet Nam. This time signing XV2LC and XV4LC.

9M8 - Mirek, VK6DXI activated 9M8DX/2 from Kuala Lumpur, West Malaysia during a business trip.

PJ4 - A multi-national team of 15+ operators was preparing to activate Bonaire "in anticipation of the new DXCC status on 10 October 2010".

ZS8M - Pierre, ZS8M was sporadically on the air from Marion Island.

ZD9 - John, ZS1LF took a one year assignment to Gough Island in September with the call ZD9GI. After much buildup to his operation, he had only 1340 QSOs. A bit more that one half on SSB and the remaining various digital modes.

RI1F - Evgenij, UA4RX returned to Franz Josef Land for another year long assignment at the weather station on Kheysa Island. He had previously signed R1FJT, his new callsign was RI1FJ.

D2 - Craig, MM0SSG began a six month stay as D2SG from Luanda, Angola. He had 6K log entries.

YK - Saad, N5FF made one of his annual visits, and was active again as YK1BA from Damascus, Syria.

ZL7 - Kaz, JH1HRJ made another short trip signing ZL7J from the Chatham Islands. He logged 2K QSOs.

I received this note from Tom a few days after he sent me his Jurassic Journal column... Ed.

Bob I need to share this story with you.

This morning I went through my logs to select the qso entries that I will probably use for the next newsletter. I ran across two entries on Nov 6, 2010 that I logged, but indicated that they were far from 100% qsos. The were 160m contacts with RI1FJ in Franz Josef Land. I had never tried for a qsl and still need that one. I discovered that the logs were on club log and there were two 160 qsos listed. One of them matched to my log entry. I submitted an OQRS for a card, and this evening I find it on LoTW already. I've never increased a band total this way before. Makes me want to get my 160 antennas ready for the next season.

Tom

P.S. Without the newsletter column I may have never discovered that log entry. Maybe I should go out yet today and buy a lottery ticket.

No word yet on if he won the lottery! - Ed.

Member News

Pam Kesselring
NØICF
February 3, 1945 - May 24, 2020

Pamela Jean Kesselring, 75, of rural Ottumwa, died May 24, 2020 at her home.

She was born February 3, 1945 in Aurora, IL to George August and Lois Harberts Gould. Growing up in Naperville, IL, she graduated from Naperville Community High School in 1963 and then Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa in 1967.

She married Glen Paul Kesselring March 1, 1969 in Naperville. They

have 2 children, Kara Lynn and Grant Paul.

She was a teacher in the Blakesburg and Cardinal School Districts for many years, as well as was employed by Manpower Temporary Services and American Home Finding Association, working with the WIC program.

She was a member of the Bladensburg Christian Church and served as deacon, choir member, and past board secretary. She was also a member of Agency TTT, PEO Chapter G, and was a Reach to Recovery volunteer. She was also active in Race For the Cure and Bosom Buddies.

Surviving is her husband, Glen; their children, Kara Lynn (Patrick) Williams of Brookfield, IL, and Grant Paul (Gina) Kesselring of Rochester, MN; 3 granddaughters, Iris Williams, Elena and Cecilia Kesselring; 2 sisters, Cynthia Ruzicka of Warrenville, IL, Barbara Ulie of Naperville, IL; and a brother Jon Gould of Naperville, IL.

She was preceded in death by her parents and her grandparents.

I took a week off from Zoom meetings to help my son remodel his bath. The pressure was on because it was the only full bath in the house, forcing my son and his wife to shower at her folks... We had the shower operational in five days. - W0GXA

Cedar Rapids Iowa Bug

Peter, ZS6TAO is in the mining business.
In his extensive key collection is this Cedar Rapids Iowa bug.
Vee and Peter offered me this key to use at their home station.

Since my Novice Days, 65 years ago, I have had an eye out for a Cedar Rapids Iowa bug. Bob Denniston-WØNWX showed me his at his home in Newton, and said it was the only bug besides a Vibroplex that he had ever owned. I have never seen one since, except for the one time in 2008, Peter, ZS6TAO, let me use his at his station in Johannesburg. It wasn't for sale. I have cruised the Iowa hamfest sale tables for years and never seen another. Mary and I were guests of Peter and his XYL Vee, ZS6ZEN who the SARL Administrator.

I suspect that some of you EIDXA ops know about the features of this bug.

It was a memorable experience to be so far from home operating with an Iowa bug. His rig was an Icom 746, just like the one on my operating desk. Talk about feeling welcome!

73, Jim WØNB, Burlington

1B Battery

"Try QRP," they said. "It'll be fun," they said.

Jeff Woods, WØODS

It's been a long time since I was able to operate Field Day. My part-time job as a musician usually supersedes ham radio activities throughout the summer. Enter Covid-19. In addition to freeing up my schedule, it's ushered in a summer of great radio enthusiasm. The fine folks I hang out with in the Cedar Rapids area, collectively known as the Radio Farm, began chatting about pooling our calls in the "Team" category. Naturally this led to trash-talk and competition. Among members of the group, there is a particularly heated rivalry between the so-called "CW Cats" and the "Phonies." Our last Radio Farm collective field day pitted the two camps together at N0MA club site near Waubeek. It was a whole lot of fun, and my CW Cats came home with the prize that day. Our 2 points per QSO and some doggedly determined operation on 40 and 80 through the night paid off.

It's probably been close to 10 years. I love a good Field Day.

Since my main rig is a Flex and I wanted to try running 1B Battery, a different rig was in order. I ended up with $250 Xeigu G1M 4-band QRP rig from Amazon. A 60 watt solar panel was available from prior years rolling RAGBRAI self-contained. A pair of 12v, 8AH Sealed Lead Acid batteries and my trusty old HF6V rounded out the major equipment list.

I chose to begin setting up at the 1800z contest start time, bargaining that I'd be able to get everything up in less than the extra 3 hours' operating time allowed for late starters. Sure enough, the first Q went into the log about 14:30 local time. I started on 40m with disappointing results.

After slogging through a few QSOs on 40, I switched to 20m with much better results. Here the Butternut and 5w QRP rig were clearly getting out. Contacts were still tough to make, but the response rate to my S&P calls was about 50%. Many times throughout the contest, I would think of Glen Johnson W0GJ and his successful 160m QRP efforts. QRP is no class for sissies, that's for sure. The little Xiegu did a respectable job, but the advertised 800 Hz CW filter had to have a shape factor of about 3:1. Powerful 1D and 1E stations easily pumped the AGC on adjacent channels. The shrill notes around 1500 Hz quickly became painful.

About 17:30 local, after a run to the house for a bottle of Ibuprofen tablets, I slipped back to 40m. Results were no better than earlier in the afternoon. So in the spirit of Field Day, I decided that making a new antenna on the spot was absolutely the right answer. Fortunately, I'm the kind of guy who keeps rolls of copperweld and various insulators on hand for just such emergencies. The antenna was constructed in about 45 minutes, cut long for trimming. I hoisted it up on an eye-hook over a branch on one of the taller pines about 50 feet up and ran it as a sloper. Initial resonance was at 6700kHz. I cut off about 10 inches from each side and ran it up again and it rang out at the low end of 40. Perfect.

Back in the tent, results were greatly improved and I hit the 50%

response metric again. About this time, it became clear that the well-known contesters could almost always pick me out on the first call, so my strategy became one of concentrating on the snappy operators. I worked 40 until dusk, then tried my hand at 80m.

The Butternut was also terrible on 80m, so I never ended up with a QSO on that band. My plans were to work 80m hard through the night. Ever adaptable, I switched to 40 again and milked QSOs out of it until midnight and then enjoyed some guilt-free sleep.

The sun broke around 6, waking me up. By 7 I was back on with an initial hit on 40, then back to 20. Eventually 20m started to go dry and it occurred to me that the Xiegu also included 15m, and that 40m dipoles were often resonant on 15 as well. This one was. It turns out that's where I should have been hours before. 15 was hot, and nearly all the running stations heard me on the first shot.

Regrettably, a spontaneous family event took me away from the operation shortly after noon. I finished up with 234 Qs, far short of my 500Q goal. But – Battery QRP CW Q's count as 10 points for Field Day, earning a respectable 2340 points.

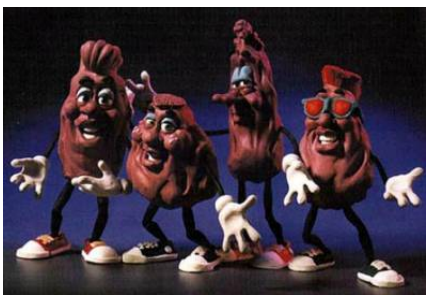
One of the unexpected difficulties for this contest was logging. If I'd used my laptop, it would have been the single largest consumer of power and would have quickly drained the batteries. Fortunately, the QRU-QSP club put together an app on a web site that worked from an Android or iPad. This was the route I chose. The app was really well done, but my internet connection was intermittent at my location, causing the need for frequent restarts. A stand-alone app would have been better, but there were none to be found. Also notably absent was the ability control a keyer, so my Begali paddles got a good workout running the Xiegu's internal keyer.

All in all, it was a pretty good way to waste a weekend.

Heard it on the grapevine...

NG7A earned is 160m DXCC endorsement!

Congratulations!



Logbook

Six Meters has been hot!

Recently, there have been quite a few 6 meter E-skip openings the last few weeks, mostly to the Southeast.

Today, June 26, there was a major opening to the Caribbean. Between 1600Z and 1900 Z, I worked J6 St. Lucia, , J7 Dominica, 8P Barbados, PV8 Brazil, HI3 Dominican Republic and KP4 Puerto Rico, all new ones for me using FT8.

I am running 90 watts with a home brew amplifier with my K3/10 (at 4 watts) and a 5 element yagi at 50 feet. The band looked like 14.074 Mhz, the 20 Meter watering hole for FT8, there were so many stations on.

73 Rich W3ACO

CQ Test

Worldwide Radiosport / Contesting Ladder

If you've ever wondered how are you doing in radiosport contests compared to others all over the world, then this news is for you. The World Amateur Radio Contesting Association began publishing ratings of hams that participate in major contests. Just go to https://warca.org and search for your call sign and then any other call sign for comparison; it's really fun. The new project attempts to rank contesters based on their aggregate participation and scores over the last 4 years. Major contests are weighted based on the size of contests using a scale of Tier One through Tier Four. The four tiers are defined as follows:

A. Tier One (Worldwide participation, same rules for all participants, at least 3000 logs)

- 1000 Points
- Examples: CQWW, CQWPX
- Exception: Special Contests (at WARCA discretion): WRTC

B. Tier Two (Worldwide participation, same rules for all participants, at least 1000 logs)

- 800 Points
- Examples: IARU

C. Tier Three (Worldwide participation, different scoring for certain geographies, at least 3000 logs):

- Examples ARRL DX, Russian DX
- 700 Points

D. Tier Four (Worldwide participation, different scoring for certain geographies, at least 1000 logs):

- Examples: WAE, CQMM, AA, Oceania, WAG
- 500 Points

The WARCA is a Swiss association with founders from numerous countries. Developers are not native English speakers and some wording may not be perfect. They welcome suggestions and corrections.

A “Contester of the Year” will be determined mid-June 2021 based on rankings in individual contests throughout this next year, starting July 2020. The first contest that counts towards the 2020/2021 competition will be IARU HF World Championship from 1200Z, Jul 11 to 1200Z, Jul 12, 2020 (Logs due: 1200Z, Jul 17).

Whether you are looking for a new challenge, having some fun or just brushing up on your skills, consider regularly entering contests throughout this next year. Who knows, perhaps the next “Contester of the Year” will be a EIDXA member.

73, George NG7A

Scores and Soapbox

WØGXA - I used the recent contests, Field Day (400 Qs) and RAC (120 Qs) to push my total log (since September 2010) over 20,000 QSOs. I got carried away and overshot my goal by 50...

IARU HF Championship and NAQP are coming up over the next four weeks. Both can be quite fun!

QRM

For Sale!

I have **AL-82 amp** for sale. New early 2015.

It had an early tube failure,replaced with a new one, has worked well. I bought a new Acom 2100 to replace it a couple years ago. Now I have four amps , only need two, so this one isn't being used now.

If you're interested, please give me a call. Might even trade for something 73 and thanks, Bob KØSRL 563-940-8054

Note: Pick-up only in the Quad Cities area - Ed.

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