

Northwest Indiana DX CLUB

Volume 12, Issue 1

January 2024

President's Corner

Happy New Year!

This is the start of our 12th year of Newsletters. Hard to believe it has been that long.

I hope each of you are doing well and have been working some good DX.

February 9th will be Meeting Day. Bernie McClenny, W3UR of The Daily DX will be presenting.

73
John W3ML
Good DXing!

Meeting Feb. 9th
12:00 Noon
Sugar Bowl Michigan City

"Working the World from the Black Hole"

NWI DX Club Website

<http://nwidclub.weebly.com/>



Don't forget Steve Mollman is our QSL Card Checker.

DXCC Card Checking is available by appointment and may be available at meetings. E-Mail kd9hl@arrl.net for an appointment or to make other arrangements.

Northwest Indiana DX Club Officers and Staff

President	W3ML	John Poindexter	w3ml.john@gmail.com
Vice President	W9KTP	Jerry Hess	jerryhess@Frontier.com
Newsletter Editor	W3ML	John Poindexter	w3ml.john@gmail.com
W9NWI Trustee	KD9HL	Steve Mollman	kd9hl@ARRL.net
Webmaster	W9YOU	John Reardon	kd9ron@ARRL.net
ARRL Card Checker	KD9HL	Steve Mollman	kd9hl@ARRL.net

Reminder, the NWIDX Club has a club call W9NWI.

The call is available to members for use during contests, special events, Field Day, etc. To schedule dates for its use, contact the trustee, Steve Mollman – KD9HL. kd9hl@arrrl.net

QSL cards are available.

Notice:

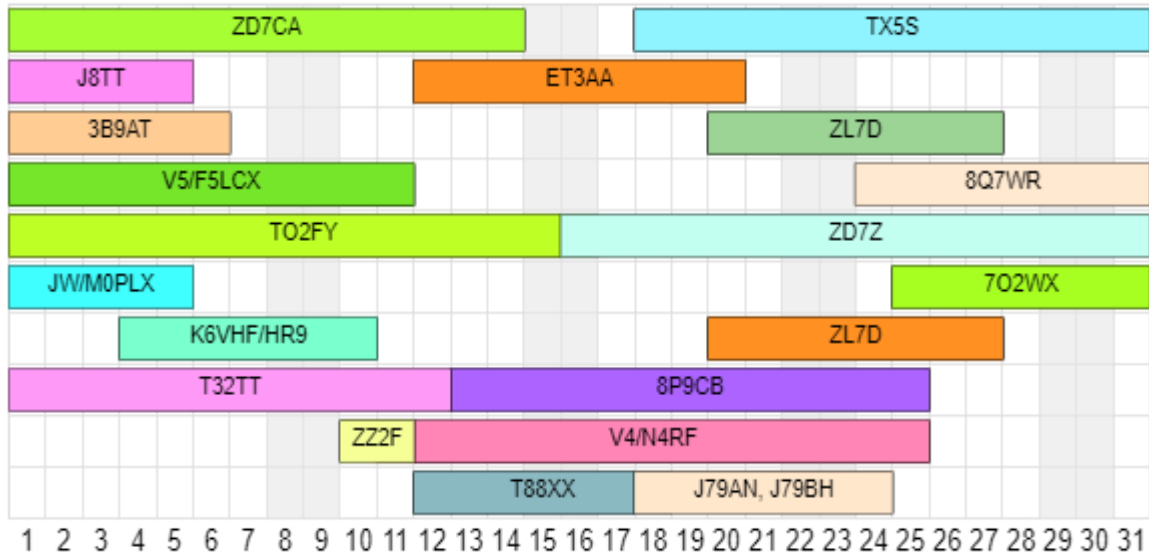
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DX LISTINGS FOR January 2024

BY
DXWorld

DXWORLD.net
FEATURED DXPEDITIONS TIMELINE

Last update: January 1, 2024



Edited by MM0NDX

JANUARY

IK8LOV Max Laconca

DX Century Club Scorecard

(As of December 31, 2023)

The ARRL DXCC certificate is awarded to amateurs who submit confirmations for contacts with 100 or more entities on the ARRL DXCC List. As of 21 January 2018, there were 340 current entities on the list. The DXCC Honor Roll includes those who are within 9 entities of that figure (or 331 entities) for the Mixed, Phone, CW and RTTY awards. A "Top of the Honor Roll Award" plaque is presented to those who have contacted and confirmed all 340 current entities.

The listing of the DXCC membership contains the call signs and exact credited totals by endorsement level. Awards and Credits are NOT activated automatically; participants must apply to have a particular award or Credit (band, mode etc.) activated when the qualifying number of confirmed contacts are obtained.

The totals were abstracted from the ARRL DXCC Standings lists. <http://www.arrl.org/dxcc-standings>

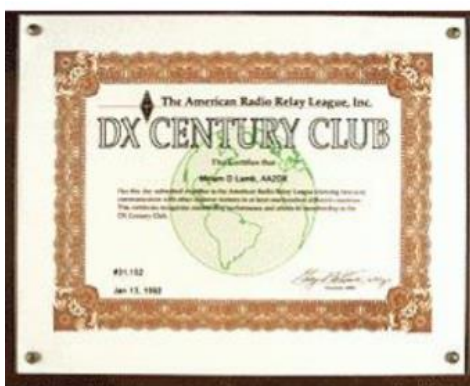
If you have worked and confirmed a DX station but have not formally submitted it to the ARRL, either through a card checker or the Log Book of the World (LOTW) program, those contacts are not counted. We have no way of knowing what new DX has been worked but not submitted.

If you have not submitted an application or update to the ARRL since January 1, 1994 your totals may not be included.

The ARRL listing DOES NOT include records from other organization's DX programs such as eQSL, Club Log, CQ Magazine and QRZ.org



1	K9FN	Dave Bunte	363
2	AG9S	Jim Sjoberg	354
3	N9RD	Juergen Nittner	352
4	AJ9C	Mike Kasrich	351
5	K9LA	Carl Luetzelschwab	351
6	W9KTP	Jerry Hess	351
7	N9FN	Dave Chasey	347
8	KD9HL	Steve Mollman	345
9	KK9R	Mac English	335



10	K9SUH	Ken Reising	330
11	W3ML	John Poindexter	324
12	ND9A	John Sikora	322
13	AE9YL	Vicki Luetzelshwab	320
14	K9WWT	George Kelly	320
15	N7GVV	James Raisler	313
16	N9YB	Mike Rosenberg	310
17	W8FIB	Tom Ruggles	309
18	KY9KYO	Rell Andreica	304
19	WA9JNO	Earl Gumm	301
20	W1PIT	Alan Pitts	287
21	N9DD	Tom Frisz	280
22	N4SV	Bill South	245
23	N9ID	Michael Strong	230
24	K9KJ	Tom Johnson	217
25	AB9QU	Bill Carter	207
26	K9MV	Paul Corey	207
27	KF9UP	Jeff Stewart	202
28	N9ITB	Jack Albert	159
29	WB9FQS	Larry Brechner	153
30	K9MQ	Mark Skowronski	152
31	AB9RY	Tom Breymeyer	144
32	KA9FAX	Anthony Kostelnik	129
33	NA9U	John Nason	121
34	W9DZ	Alan Jones	120
35	WD4MSM	Barry Keating	115
36	KC9GTN	Edward Benchik	110

37	N9AFU	Mike Burdett	109
38	W9ORW	Robert Pence	106
39	KB9BIT	Tom Laskowski	105
40	KC9OYE	Chuck Hill	103
41	KC9TEW	Jeff Kohn	100
42	WJ9Q	Martin Dzik	100

Congratulations to all who have increased their count!

Question of the Month

(The correct answer is at the end of the Newsletter)

What is the object mounted on the bottom of this B-52 bomber?



- A. A hook to attach a towing strap.**
- B. A VHF antenna**
- C. A stabilizing fin to reduce turbulence when the wheels are down.**
- D. A mount for a special jack used to change the tires.**

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With permission from the MARC Update, December 17, 2023

- ***Automated FT8: An Editorial***

The first “Automated FT8 DXpedition” will probably take place sometime this year; it’s inevitable. Field Day 2024 stations will “earn” enormous point totals the likes of which have never been seen before. You will not know you are “communicating” with a “Radiobot,” but you will undoubtedly log numerous “Radiobots,” or Automated FT8 stations at this year’s Field Day. There is no way to detect or prevent it from happening.

Following the direction of the ARRL Board of Directors, the ARRL has incorporated changes to the rules for all ARRL-sponsored contests and **DXCC** awards, prohibiting automated contacts. These changes also apply to the Worked All States (including Triple Play and 5-Band **WAS**), and **VHF/UHF Century Club** awards. The changes are in effect now. However...

A resolution at a recent ARRL Board of Directors meeting pointed to “growing concern over fully automated contacts being made and claimed” for contest and **DXCC** credit. **There is no way to detect stations violating the rules!** The rules now require that each claimed contact include contemporaneous direct initiation by the operator on both sides of the contact. Initiation of a contact may be either local or remote but must be completed by the operator. **How can this rule be enforced? It may be technologically impossible to enforce and the ARRL has already given a wink and a nod to automated stations by not even attempting to put into place any reasonable controls or checks!**

Since the initial release of these time-synced modes like FT8, there has been a growing popularity among everyday HF DXers, award chasers, and even casual

HF operators. Because of their simplicity and high level of automation, making multiple "QSOs" simultaneously is easier than copying a digital computer file from one folder to another. It was just a matter of time before high-profile awards, like the **DXCC**, the **WAS**, and the **WPX**, but also the lower profile awards (e.g., POTA/SOTA Awards), **lost their prestige** (already they no longer have any prestige). **With automated FT8 anyone can easily "earn" DXCC in a single weekend, perhaps in just a few hours if you use multiple instances of WSJT-Z.**

On the other hand, the cashiers of **awarding organizations started experiencing increasing money flows**, which led to even more marketing of FTx modes. Nowadays, it is not uncommon to tune around the Amateur HF bands and find no signals other than FT8/FT4, with one's RX s-meter peaking at s9+.

The **initial purpose** of the modes supported by the original developers' suite was the Weak Signals and for work on VHF/UHF and higher, in particular. **There is virtually no user of FT8 that currently has these goals in mind when operating.**

"The Human Touch: Critiquing the Rise of Automation in FT8 for HF Contacts"

The realm of amateur radio, once revered for its human-centric ethos, is experiencing a seismic shift with the ascent of FT8 and its automated procedures. Developed by Joe Taylor (K1JT) and Steve Franke (K9AN), FT8's efficiency in establishing high-frequency "contacts" has garnered widespread praise. However, this begs the question of the darker implications of FT8's increasing reliance on automation, questioning the erosion of operator skills, the depersonalization of contacts, and the potential disruptions to spectrum etiquette.

FT8 touted as a technological marvel, has become a staple in amateur radio circles for its prowess in making contacts under challenging conditions. Yet, the very features that make it efficient—automated signal decoding, frequency selection, and contact initiation and conclusion—have sparked a growing debate within the Amateur community.

FT8 is a double-edged menace; consider just some of the concerns its automated use creates.

1. **Skill Erosion and Absolute Technological Dependency:** One of the most critical concerns surrounding FT8's automation is the perilous erosion of operator skills (and the lack of building those skills in newly licensed Amateurs). Traditional amateur radio operators prided themselves on the mastery of the intricacies involved in tuning, zero-beating, filtering, adapting to unpredictable propagation conditions, creating an on-air persona, and making split-second decisions during contacts. The siren call of FT8's automated processes lulls operators into a false sense of technological dependency, rendering them ill-equipped to handle the dynamic challenges that characterize amateur radio. The Radio Amateur becomes just the individual who turns on the machine, a low-level clerk.

2. **Impersonal Disconnect:** In the pursuit of efficiency through automation, FT8 sacrifices the very essence of amateur radio—**personal connections**. Traditional contacts (i.e., non-FT8 contacts) are distinguished by nuanced conversations, the exchange of local and personal information, and a unique adaptability to the idiosyncrasies of each contact and mode. The standardization of message formats and the automation of sequencing in FT8 strips away the rich tapestry of human interaction, reducing

contacts to clinical transactions devoid of the warmth that has long defined the hobby. There is **no such thing as a “Ragchew”** with FT8; most newly licensed Amateurs have probably never heard the term, let alone experienced a deeply satisfying Ragchew contact that you want to tell someone about.

3. Spectrum Etiquette Erosion: FT8's automation extends beyond convenience, encroaching upon the principles of spectrum etiquette. The meticulous manual tuning, which has been a hallmark of traditional operations, ensures that operators avoid unintentional interference and disruptions. However, FT8's automated frequency selection and reporting mechanisms introduce an element of risk, leading to a breakdown in the cooperative and courteous spirit that has historically characterized the use of amateur radio frequencies.

4. An Unsettling Paradigm Shift: As FT8 rises in popularity, it heralds an unsettling paradigm shift within the amateur radio community. The allure of technological convenience threatens to overshadow the values of craftsmanship and skill that were once at the heart of the hobby. The question that looms large is whether the community is willing to sacrifice its soul at the altar of efficiency.

Examples of automation have become commonplace on the web. Check out **FT8Comander**. According to the author, “**FT8Commander** is an experimental project for ham radio operators who want automatic control of their FT8 contacts.” **WSJT-Z** is another program that features automation at its core. According to its author, “Please always attend to your transceiver when

using WSJT-Z, unless the automated operation is legal in your location.” That’s not very reassuring, but nobody I know would ever consider doing otherwise even though the automated operation is built into the software!

According to Anthony (K3NG), “FT8 or another similar automated mode was going to happen sometime. It’s like the concept of *steam engine time*. The idea or theory is that the steam engine would have been invented at probably the same time in history by anyone or several people simultaneously in the world, even if many inventors were isolated and not in contact with each other. It was just bound to happen at some point given the progression of technology and the availability of materials and know-how to do it. We all knew (well, those of us with engineering know-how) that a semi-synchronous extremely low baud rate, low signal-to-noise ratio mode would work and be quite robust. It’s Shannon’s Theorem applied. What is at issue is the way Joe Taylor packaged it. We could do great things with low baud rate/low S/N modes. How about a TCP/IP link to a BBS on the moon or an open global resilient messaging network that works on every band in the lowest of the low sunspot cycles? Instead, it was packaged as a low-effort point-and-click QSO slot machine, unable to convey anything intelligent... The FT8 mode itself is not bad technology, or detrimental to amateur radio. The mindless fashion in which it is in use I’m not so sure about.”

MARC members will have to make up their minds individually about their use of “Automated FT8.” Don’t be a “Mode Bigot” simply trashing some modes while lauding your favorite operating modes. Everyone has a right to their personal opinion, but as a club, we will have to communally decide how to approach club activities (like Field Day) concerning “Automated FT8.” It’s silly to compare the performance of automated systems to the efforts of traditional human operators. Serious consideration should be given to how automated systems now in use have changed Field Day, POTA, SOTA, and so many other cherished events and awards. Just as college football has been changed forever by the NIL rules and the Transfer Portal, Amateur Radio has been changed forever; the

“currency” of awards and the scoring of events we have used in the past is also forever devalued.

MARC Update welcomes your contribution to the conversation (which will be published unaltered).

With permission from the MARC Update, December 24, 2023

- ***Editorial***

Written by: Brian McIntosh, K9TI

Where do I begin... I feel this editorial was written from the perspective of lack of understanding and experience in the FT or Digital modes. Based on the specific attack of FT8, leaving out FT4 and the 9 other modes supported by WSJT-X, while stating these modes require less skill and abilities speaks to inexperience and familiarity with them. The overall positive affect these modes have made on our hobby and the renewed activity levels was completely ignored. I personally feel if you are going to publish such an opinioned perspective you should have detailed knowledge and real-world experience in the mode, not just what you've read. Furthermore, writing from the standpoint of "We" vs. "I" leads the reader to believe this is not just the perspective of the author, but also one of the clubs, which I don't believe is the case.

While I agree there are SOME stations using an “automation bot”, it should be noted that the control operator must still be present, or this is a violation of Part 97.7. The only legal and allowable automatically controllable station is addressed in Part 97.109 subsection (d). This was

not the context or point of this article. The author points out "there is no way to detect stations violating the rules", this is false. In FT contest, most log checkers will pick-out "bot" made Qs vs. manmade. This is no different than other log violations made in contest. Outside of a contest, it does complicate things, but this is no different than the 1,500-watt max power output rule. Amateur Radio Operators have always been held to higher standards, it's about morals, ethics, and doing the right thing. Some people violate rules, cheat, and do illegal activities, that doesn't mean most operators and stations are.

I would challenge the author's statement of operator skills eroding or diminishing. On the surface, FT modes and WSJT-X seem easy to set-up and operate. The setup of WSJT-X isn't simple, it can be extremely complex depending on one's operating conditions and requirements. I'm not going into details, but when contesting there are times, I can have 2, 3 or even 4 sessions of FT8 open. Operating FT8 in an SO2R (Single Operator 2 Radio) environment is anything but simple. Even in a "simple" single operator configuration, there are technical skills and knowledge required. Advancing one's operator skill is required, especially if you are chasing rare DX or a DX-pedition, because most of them are using Fox and Hound mode.

I will comment on the "Impersonal Disconnect" point specifically, as this point was certainly one written of opinion. The history of amateur radio wasn't that of warmth, long winded conversations. It was one of short messages, sending basic communications, and reports. One can argue that FT and digital modes are closer to the origin of ham radio than many other modes. Personally, I appreciate the inability to "ragchew" on FT. I find it unappealing to listen to peoples' aches and pains, what they had

for breakfast, where they are going for lunch, or any such conversation. However, this is my opinion and if you enjoy that good for you, more power to you! I'm not going to insinuate you are somehow harming our beloved hobby by participating in such activity.

Spectrum etiquette erosion, and an unsettling paradigm shift, are the next couple of points the author brings up. While I could comment in detail on all of these, I feel it best I keep it short. When Single Side Band was created, did that do away with CW? When tube radios were replaced by transistor radios, or now SDR did that ruin the hobby? What about when computers or the internet was intertwined into the hobby, has that lessen the experience? Of course not! As a point, just a week ago on the ARRL 10-meter contest, there were FAR MORE CW stations on air than SSB. To imply that FT8 is somehow going to dilute, diminish, or negatively change our hobby is a farce.

We could have a discussion on the term "automation" all on its own, but FT or WSJT-X software isn't the first automation of a mode or of the hobby. How many of you only use tube radios? How many of you only use a straight key? What about paper logs? Most CW operators today, especially contesters, don't even use a key or paddle. Most of the operating is done with a keyboard, logging software, and radio, heck some even use a CW skimmer! Is that somehow harming the hobby? No, it isn't. I personally know some of the greatest CW operators in the hobby and they use this method but would roast most with a paddle as well. All of this technology has made it more enjoyable, but also has made it more challenging, and increased skill levels, not lessened it.

What the author notes about FT8 being the most popular mode is true. There are more stations on FT8, especially DX stations today than any other mode. My question for the author would be, do you understand why? The answer is simple, because you can work more stations in an orderly manor than you can with SSB or CW. If you haven't been on the receive side of a pile up, it's hard to explain. The simple answer is, DX stations do it so than can get more Qs in the logs, period. The rest of those that operate FT do it for many reasons and whatever those reasons, they are perfectly fine with me, because they are on the air and putting Qs in the log!

Personally, I do operate the FT modes, I even compete in the FT and Digital contest. At times it does feel like it is like watching paint dry, but it still has excitement. For those that are getting involved in FT8 and that is their primary mode or only mode, I think it is our responsibility as Elmers to grow and develop those operators. We shouldn't discourage, belittle, or criticize their activity in the hobby. Otherwise, you have just became the old guy complaining about the new blood in the hobby, then turning around saying the hobby is dying and you don't understand why.

73, Brian K9TI

NOAA Forecasts Quicker, Stronger Peak of Solar Activity

Cycle 25 Still Expected to be “Below Average”

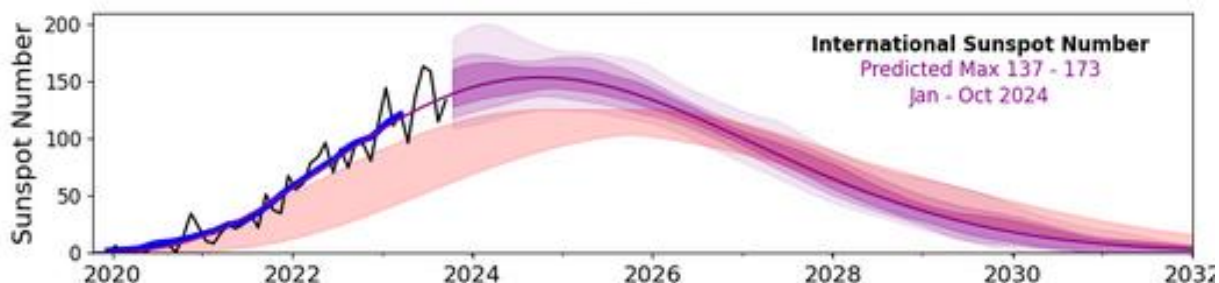
The sun is expected to reach the peak of the current Cycle 25 in 2024, one year earlier than previous estimates, according to NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Center (SWPC).

The NOAA prediction now places [Solar Cycle 25](#)'s peak of activity known as "solar maximum" between January and October 2024 with a maximum sunspot number between 137 and 173. The peak will be earlier, stronger and last longer than the estimates they previously made.

The solar cycle describes an approximately 11-year period of solar activity driven by the sun's magnetic field and indicated by the frequency and intensity of visible [sunspots](#) on the surface.

Predictions on when solar maximum will occur are based on long-term historical records of sunspot numbers, advanced statistics and models of the solar dynamo — the flow of hot, ionized gases within [the sun](#) that generate our star's magnetic field which in turn drives the solar cycle.

Solar Cycle 25 Prediction



No two solar cycles are the same, Solar magnetic variability - measured by sunspot number - regulates the frequency and severity of space weather events and hazards, which can interfere with the electrical grid, degrade GPS signals, increase orbital drag on satellites, and pose radiation hazards to airline crews and astronauts. Stronger solar cycles produce more solar storms with greater intensity and therefore pose a larger hazard for these critical technologies and services.

Solar Cycle 24 was the weakest cycle in 100 years with sunspot number peaking at 116 for the solar cycle, well below average, which is 179. NOAA's new prediction, though larger than their original prediction and larger than Cycle 24, would still make the strength of Solar Cycle 25 below average.

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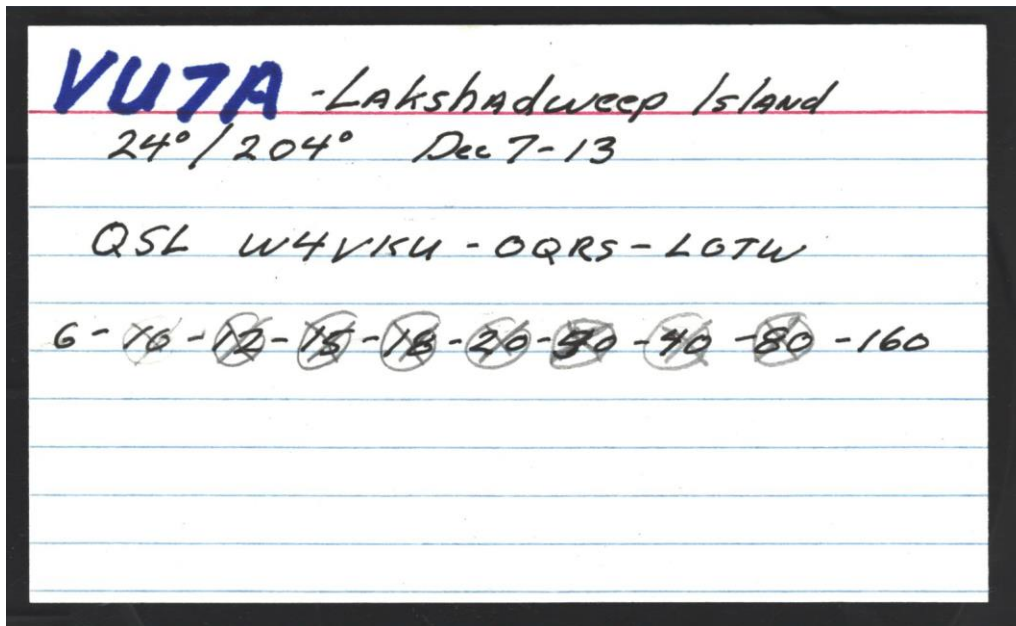
Handy Hint

Organize the DXpeditions

By Steve Mollman-KD9HL

Since the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, happily, there has been an upsurge in DXpeditions. During late November and early December there were at least five different DXpeditions at semi-rare locations operating at the same time. How can you keep track of the ones you need, the band slots, QSL info, etc?

One way is to create a simple index card with the vital information. This card should have at minimum, the entity, call letters, beam headings and dates of operation. If you are chasing the DX Challenge it is handy to have the band slots listed and you can cross out each one as they are filled.



Since this is a “custom” card you can use the blank space to put in frequencies, modes and times that the DX has been operating or other information.

<Q>

Do you have a Handy Hint that you would like to share? Contact Steve Mollman at KD9HL@ARRL.net

Question of the Month Answer:

What is the object mounted on the bottom of this B-52 bomber?

Answer: B. A VHF Antenna

Military aircraft, typically bombers in the 1960s, used a VHF jamming transmitter to disrupt the voice communications of interceptor aircraft. This jamming required broadband, omnidirectional antennas, such as this antenna. Because of its shape it was often called a scimitar antenna.



The Scimitar antenna has a long history in both electronic warfare and as a telemetry antenna in the Apollo space program. The inner radius sets the high frequency, and the outer radius sets the low-frequency range of the antenna. The Scimitar antenna has a natural input impedance of about 20 ohms, so some kind of 20-50 ohm matching network is necessary.

For an in-depth study of the antenna see: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/33368286.pdf>



Proppy

HF Propagation Prediction

"...predict available frequencies, signal levels and corresponding reliabilities for High Frequency..."

<https://soundbytes.asia/proppy/>

Voice of America Radio Towers - Controlled Demolition, Inc.

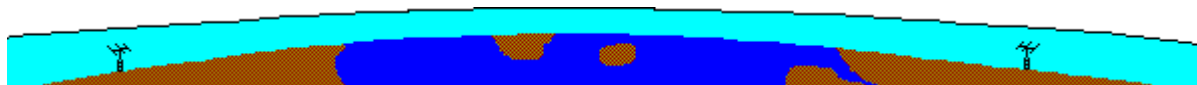
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zcsbny8PFZw>

FOR SALE ITEMS

If you have ham items for sale, email me a list along with prices and contact information. I will put it in the next newsletter.

Let me know when an item is no longer for sale so I can remove it.
For Sale items will be removed from the newsletter after 3 months.

I want to thank those that have been sending in articles for the newsletter. All items are appreciated.



Until Next Time,
73

John

W3ML

President Northwest Indiana DX Club

<http://nwidxclub.weebly.com/>



DX

THANKS
Thanks for visiting!

