

Northwest Indiana DX CLUB

Volume 4, Issue 12

December 2016

President's Corner

The next meeting will be on December 3rd at Noon. Same place: Viking Chili Bowl in Valparaiso.

For those that can work 160 meters it has been open for the past few days.

Even 6 meters has had some openings.

If we don't see you at the meeting, have a wonderful holiday season.

73

John, W3ML
Happy DXing!

Don't Forget

DXCC CARD CHECKING

Doctor Richard Lochner, K9CIV has been appointed an Official ARRL DXCC Card Checker. Contact Rich to schedule an appointment for card checking.

You may email him at k9civ@arrl.net for details on how to mail your cards to him, if you desire to go that route.



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- 2- Member News/DX News

NWI DX Club Website

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

Handy Hint

Rusty Nuts and Bolts

By Steve Mollman-KD9HL

While not often thought of as a problem in the world of electronics, rusted bolts and nuts can rear their ugly heads (pun intended). We have all had to deal with them, particularly with equipment exposed to the weather. Often it is a frustrating and sometimes destructive exercise to loosen a corroded nut or bolt.

I recently ran across an article in the “Machinist Workshop Magazine” where they tested the effectiveness of various penetrating oils. They experimented by using popular penetrating oils to help remove a nut from a “scientifically rusted bolt”. The unit of merit was the amount of torque needed to remove a nut from the bolt.

	Average torque to loosen a nut:	Approx. cost per Oz (Walmart)
No oil used	516 foot pounds	
WD-40	238 foot pounds	54.3¢
PB Blaster	214 foot pounds	34.2¢
Liquid Wrench	127 foot pounds	30.1¢
Kano Aero Kroil	106 foot pounds	\$1.05
Home-Brew ATF/Acetone Mix*	53 foot pounds	13.5¢

*The Home Brew ATF/Acetone Mix was a concoction of 50% Automatic Transmission Fluid and 50% Acetone.



It is interesting to note that “PB Blaster” enjoys a near cult like status among many users but is one of the poorer performers. It is also notable that Liquid Wrench worked nearly as well as Kano AeroKroil but is significantly cheaper (Walmart prices). The home-brew mix is something I recall using in the Air Force back in the 1960’s. It has been around a long time.

Of course, many rusted bolt problems can be avoided by using stainless steel bolts and fittings along with an anti-seize compound such as those marketed by Permatex or Loctite. They are usually available at your local auto parts store.



It is especially advisable to use stainless steel fittings in any application that is exposed to the weather i.e. antennas, rotators, control boxes etc.

β 73's and good DX β

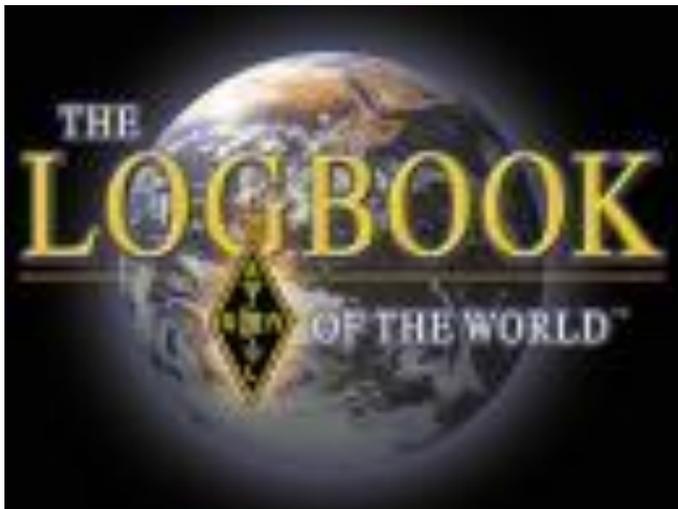
Member DXCC Scorecard

We have received some comments regarding last month's listing of the club member's ARRL DXCC totals. For clarification this is how the list was compiled.

1. Only current call letters were listed. If a member had obtained a DXCC certificate under a previous call sign we could not list it. Old call signs are not available to us.
2. The listing was abstracted from the current ARRL records of **approved** submittals. <http://www.arrl.org/dxcc-standings>
3. 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.
4. If you obtained a DXCC certificate before the mid 1990's, your record may not be included in the ARRL listings. Before that time, the ARRL DX Desk kept all of the records on paper. Sometime in that period the **new applications and only new applications** were computerized. The old paper records were not automatically included during the computerization. Old records were only put into the computer when a personal request was made. This usually happens when a ham has changed his call sign and/or has made application for new contacts to be included in his record. The online DXCC records are compiled from the computer records (the old paper records are not automatically included).
5. If you want to merge your old call signs into the new, contact the ARRL DXCC Desk. (1-860-594-0200 or 1-888-277-5289 (toll-free US only) M-F 8:00 AM-5:00 PM ET)
6. The listing **DOES NOT** include records from other organization's DX programs such as eQSL, Club Log and QRZ.org.

Working DX is a very personal achievement and we all know the thrill of working a "NEW ONE" and increasing our country count! Every day we are watching the spots and tuning the bands. There is a certain excitement in "busting" a pileup and working a station in some exotic location thousands of miles away. The icing on the cake is when we get confirmation of the contact through either a QSL card or LOTW. Christmas in July is a big packet of QSL cards from the bureau. Congratulations to all for their achievements in working DX.

Go work some DX today and share your experiences with the other members at the next luncheon. (December 3rd at Noon CST-Viking Chili Bowl-Valparaiso). Good company, good food, good prices, plenty of parking and no pile-ups!



The Road to Working Them All

Part 1

—*Brian Alsop K3KO*—

I was asked to put together a write-up on “Working Them All” for the Pile Up. For good or bad, here it is.

There must be a reason to try. My reason started back in 1960. It started when I was answered by a WH6 station in Hawaii on 40M CW. Wow! All that distance on 75 watts. Then 15M was also open. A couple more DX on 15M and the bug bit. The infection has lasted 56 years. The magic of tiny bits of RF generated by your station being detected on the other side of the world is still there.

That infection had to be held in remission for many years. College, marriage, kids and several moves got in the way of station building and DXing.

In the late 80's, it became possible to have a decent station. Then another bug bit. You've worked 200 countries, 300 might be possible. It took to 1997 to get to the 300 mark. Unfortunately, that bug mutated into one which dictated: “You have to work them all”. So it's not a rational pursuit, it's a disease. It took to 2009 to get there. Along the way came CW, PHONE and RTTY Honor Roll. The bug mutated again and again. What about 5 Band DXCC? Then 10 Band DXCC. Then VUCC. Now it's trying to reach the 3000 level in the ARRL Challenge award.

The road is long. It took me 49 years. It's highly competitive. It is also a matter of some luck. The last few you may need probably haven't been active for 30 years. One(s) you need may never appear. So it ends up being a lifetime pursuit with some chance of failure. The last few worked were: VU7, KH8/Swain's Island, VU4, VP8 South Sandwich, VP6 Duchie Island and P5 North Korea.

The game can change enroute. Just when you've worked them all and are ready to submit an application, a new country appears and you have to work that too. KH8 Swains Island and VP6/D were two of those for me. Staying on Top of the HR has the same problem.

One thing that will positively help –live long. Prosper doesn't hurt either.

There is no best road to take. Everyone's road will be different. Below are some tips and commentary that may help. Sorry they are essentially unordered and the format stinks.

The biggest tip: **DON'T EVER GIVE UP!**

Amateur Extra License

You won't be among the frustrated Generals hoping the DXpedition will listen in the General Band.

CW, CW speed and Sending

You improve your chances of working rare ones (particularly DXpeditions) if you come proficient in CW. No code readers, they don't help in the chaos.. Being able to copy 20 -30 WPM will help significant-ly. BEING ABLE TO SEND YOUR CALL AND

5NN FLAWLESSLY at these speeds helps too. It frustrates everyone to hear a guy trying to send his call and making mistake after mistake. A wrong call in the DX's log won't help you. There are other reasons for using CW. See discussion of SKIMMER.

A Decent Receiver and Filters

DXing tests the capabilities of receivers and their operator. One obviously needs adequate sensitivity. That's not enough. One doesn't want a receiver that folds when a bunch of strong signals appear. You have to be able to hear your call in the din. That means adequate selectivity. Sherwood has a list ranking the various receivers on their ability to withstand the din. See: <http://www.sherweng.com/table.html>. For filters, I ended up with 200 and 400 Hz filters on CW and a 1.8 KHz filter for SSB. The SSB filter isn't high fidelity. One doesn't need fidelity, only the ability to hear your call.

Learn how to use your receiver. The new generation of DSP receivers are a bit different. It used to be that one just cranked up the RF gain to max, selected no attenuators and then rode the AF gain. DSP based receivers work best on weak signals with noise reduced to low levels. Then signals seem to pop out of the noise. This means using receiver attenuators – especially on 160-40M.

AGC settings can really screw up or help copy. Find those on your receiver that work for each mode. For me a slow AGC is absolutely necessary for RTTY. Some receivers have adjustable AGC parameters. Know what you're doing when tweaking them. Write down the default values somewhere! Most of today's receivers have nearly 100 dB of dynamic range. Using AGC is necessary to prevent blowing your ears out. Some receivers have audio limiters. They are a good idea even with AGC selected. Old receivers used to just saturate and spared your ears.

Use Earphones

You're throwing away at least 10 dB in signal/noise ratio by using speakers. Hearing aids and earphones are problematic. There are some earphones that are more hearing aid friendly. Many of today's receivers have a built in audio equalizers and lots of audio output. By adjusting the receiver's audio equalizers, one can approximate hearing aid benefits and not have to use a hearing aid. Other members of the household will appreciate your use of earphones – especially at 3 AM.

WFWL

Work First, Worry Later. If you hear a station that is supposedly a pirate, work them anyhow. You may end up working a legit one. Right now there are a bunch of YI pirates. At least one YI station is legit. I won't get into Romeo's P5 and his other operations here.

Ability to work all HF bands

Propagation varies greatly from band to band. It goes from zero to useful. Being able to work all bands (especially the WARC bands) improves ones chances of working a needed station somewhere.

Work all Modes

DX often shows up on your non-favorite mode. Being able to snag them improves your totals. One example. My first P5 contact was on RTTY. He was operating reverse shift and at a higher than normal baud rate. Being able to figure this out and set the station up to match his parameters made the contact possible.

DX Cluster

Having Internet DX spots, filtered so that ones you need and sound an alarm is of great help. Being able to click on a spot and send the rig there is a big help. It also helps to look back with SH/DX to see bands and frequencies the stations of interest are working, who they are working at what times.

Logging program with computer control of rig

Pulls date, time, mode into the log. Automatic bookkeeping. Eliminates copy errors. LOTW submittal easy. Life is good.

Hit Lists

Know what you need. Review DX announcements for when operations will happen. Don't schedule a vacation for the next P5 operation. Hit lists generation is easy/automatic with today's logging programs.

Work Contests

The best equipped DX stations and operators show up during contests. They rapidly work down the pileups so that later in the contest even QRP stations can work them. Have some program available that alarms the ones you need.

Instant QSY

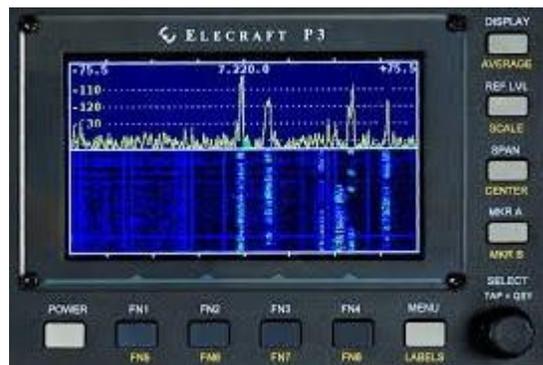
A rare one was just spotted. Pileups grow by the second. Having the ability to jump from band to band and mode to mode in an instant gives you an edge. It means having automatic antenna selection, autotune amplifiers and tuners. ICOM transceivers have a flaw here. Their band data output to switch antennas does not produce unique outputs for all HF bands. 15/17 M and 12/10M have the same output codes. This is crazy since most people will have entirely different antennas for WARC and non-WARC bands. They got stuck in the rut many years ago and even the newest and most expensive ICOM's still suffer.

Split

Few rare ones don't operate split these days. Be able to quickly go to split and identify the stations being worked. Some rigs make this a pain. My K3 was one of them. Fortunately I also bought the subrx. With a macro key, going into split with up 1, up 5 etc is a single press. The main RX stays on the DX station, the subrx frequency is where transmit occurs. Tuning the subrx allows one to identify the stations being worked and have the transmit VFO track. There is an even better way for CW to identify the station being worked— see section on SKIMMER. BTW having a subrx is a huge benefit for working DX and pileups.

Panadapter

Panadapters can visually display of the spectrum of stations calling the DX. One can often identify the last station being worked via the blips. The downside is that so many people are using them; you're at a competitive disadvantage not having one. It is also impacting DXpedition operation. They no longer can listen on a single split frequency for very long. After one or two QSO's, the panadapter mob has found that frequency. Mayhem results. DXpeditions are now often tuning up/down/around after one QSO. Having a panadapter allows one to determine what listening pattern (if any) the DX operator is using.



SKIMMER

SKIMMER is a program that SIMULTANEOUSLY decodes hundreds of CW stations over a 24 KHz swath of spectrum. It can display a bandmap of calls or a sorted list of calls and send that information to your logging program in the form of "cluster" spots. The \$75 program can be obtained here: <http://www.dxatlas.com/cwskimmer/>

One way SKIMMER works is via a Software Defined Receiver attached to your receiver IF. A significant number of receivers have an IF output jack. Digitized information about the spectrum is sent to a sound card which SKIMMER decodes. The attached figure shows an example of SKIMMER output for a recent 3C Dxpedition. Finding the frequency of the station last worked in the pileup is a real problem. Tuning and trying to find them manually is often quite difficult. If the stations being worked can be heard at your station, it becomes a simple matter of locating them on either a band map or alphabetized listing of SKIMMER decoded stations. It gets better. Properly configured, a mouse click on the last station can put your transmit VFO on that frequency. One can then tweak that frequency based upon the observed DX stations tuning method. Some SKIMMER output examples:

This is for a 3C7A pileup on 20 M. The lower left shows the panadapter display of the pileup. The SKIMMER waterfall shows a portion of the SKIMMER decode window.

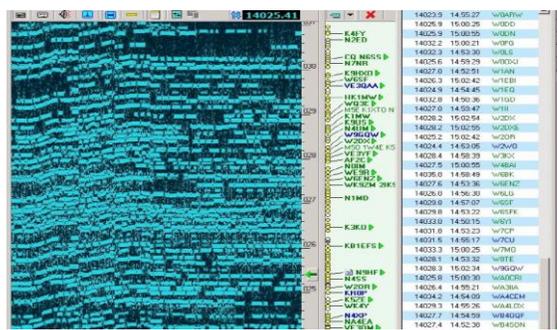
On the right side is an alphabetically sorted list of the SKIMMER decoded calls.

To use this: Listen to who the DX last worked.

- 1) Click on the call of that station.
- 2) This puts the rig's transmit VFO on that frequency.
- 3) Tweak the VFO frequency using the waterfall "holes" and operators listing pattern.
- 4) Call



Below is a portion of the SKIMMER output for a K1N pileup. Good luck in finding the last station worked manually by tuning. This illustrates the power of SKIMMER in trying to crack a pileup. Note how close the calling stations are to each other. SKIMMER seems to have no problem with extremely close spaced CW signals.



The above discussion refers to one's personal SKIMMER, not the Internet variety. Your personal SKIMMER only produces spots for stations that you're actually hearing. This is a real plus. Besides Dxpedition operations, SKIMMER is quite useful for locating new ones in CW contests. In fact, properly set up, SKIMMER can act like a second op for everyday use. Mine sits on the subrx, scanning the band for DX, while I operate the main receiver. Spots appear in the logging program as the "robot" op finds DX. By the way SKIMMER is the best CW decoder around. It uses statistical analysis of the entire transmission to get the call right. I've seen it decode signals with a 1 dB Signal/Noise ratio. My ears generally need a 6 -10 dB S/N ratio.

QSK

Having the ability to hear the DX station between your CW dots and dashes helps tremendously. You can hear that he came back to another station (or even you!) and cease transmitting. Also you can time your calls much better. You won't be transmitting when you should be listening. Timing is crucial in pileups.

TURN UP THE MONITOR VOLUME

It will make you feel louder and make you more aggressive. Really! — *Brian Alsop K3KO*

This concludes Part 1. The series "The Road to Working Them All" will resume next month with Part 2 and will cover a wide range of topics ranging from pile-up techniques to propagation. — Editor

This article was originally published in the North Florida DX Association's newsletter "Pileup". We thank the author-K3KO and the newsletter's editor Warren Croke, NW4C for their gracious permission to use the article.

The author, Brian Alsop-K3KO, is an Extra Class licensee having DXCC totals of 351-mixed, 343-phone and 346-cw. He resides in Jacksonville, Florida.

QSL Card of the Month

A collection of the old, the new, the rare, the exotic or just interesting QSL Cards

Ducie Island – VP6

Club Log 2016 Most Wanted:

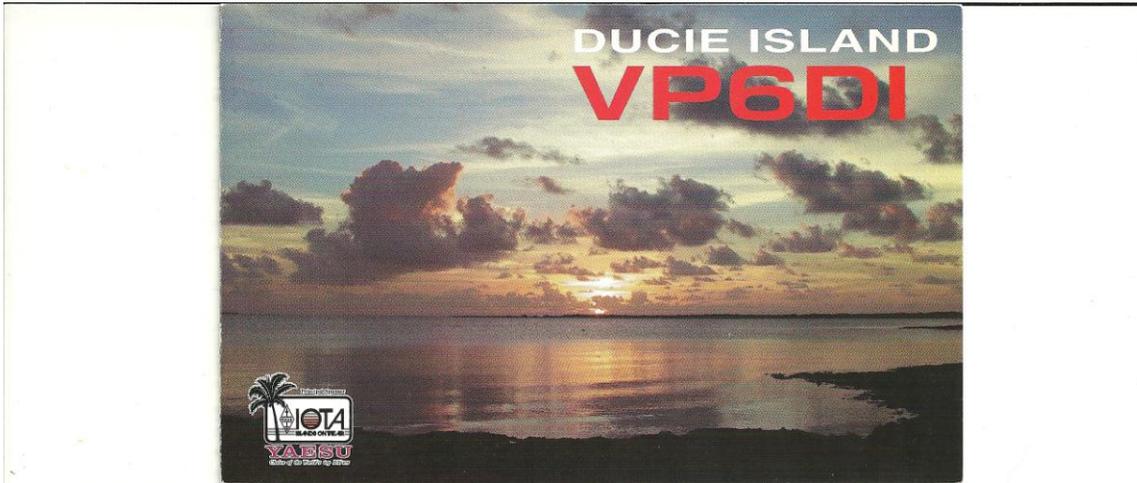
World Rank: #34 North America Rank: #64

CQ zone: 32 ITU Zone: 63

Continent: OC

Location: 24°40'S 124°47'W

Beam Headings from Northwestern Indiana: 215°/35° 5175 mi / 19683 mi



Part of the Pitcairn Island group, Ducie is the most isolated of the four islands. The nearest land is Henderson Island (uninhabited), which is 220 miles to the West-Northwest. Pitcairn Island is 223 miles away. Ducie is a coral atoll, but has

been the site of past volcanic activity. This has left the shoreline adjacent to the lagoon with a sharp and jagged surface that makes walking without foot protection difficult to impossible. The shoreline is made up of broken coral, seashells and stones. Ducie has an area of .4 square miles and is about 13 feet above sea level. The only significant vegetation is *Tournefortia argentea* (called cabbage trees by the Pitcairn islanders). Wildlife consists of several species of seabirds and millions of crabs. More than 90% of the world population of Murphy's petrel nests on Ducie,



Pedro Fernandes de Queirós, a Portuguese navigator in the service of Spain, who named it Luna Puesta, first discovered Ducie in 1606. Edward Edwards, captain of HMS Pandora, who was sent Pitcairn Island in 1790 to capture the mutineers of HMS Bounty, later rediscovered it. He named the island Ducie in honor of Francis Reynolds-Moreton, 3rd Baron Ducie. In 1867, the United States claimed it under the Guano Islands Act, but the United Kingdom annexed it on 19 December 1902 as part of the Pitcairn Islands. Due to its inaccessibility and the distance from habitation, Ducie is rarely visited.

There have been four DXpeditions to Ducie Island: VP6DI-2002 VP6DIA-2003 VP6UU-2006 VP6DX-2008.

- 73's and Good DX -

NEW RUSSIAN ARCTIC OVER-THE-HORIZON RADARS SET FOR 2017 STARTUP

(No interference on the Ham Bands? We shall see! Stay tuned!)

According to media accounts, more long-range, new over-the-horizon (OTH) radars that can identify aerial and sea targets hundreds of miles away are scheduled to begin operation next year in the Russian Arctic. It's doubtful, however, that the news heralds the return of interference on the level of that generated by the so-called "Russian Woodpecker" OTH radar, which plagued Amateur Radio HF bands in the 1970s and 1980s.

Over the past couple of years, OTH radars, sans woodpecker, have become increasingly commonplace intruders on Amateur Radio bands, according to the International Amateur Radio Union Region 1 (IARU R1) Monitoring System (IARUMS), which has noted OTH radars in Russia, China, Cyprus, Iran, and Turkey. The frequency-hopping nature of the technology accounts for the annoying interference that covers wide swaths of spectrum. The Russian systems-intelligence "Konteyner RLS" OTH radar, transmitting from the Nizhny Novgorod region, is frequently spotted on 20 meters. While no woodpecker, it transmits a broad,

frequency-modulated CW signal at 50 sweeps per second with a bandwidth of 80 kHz or greater, accompanied by signal splatter, IARUMS Coordinator Wolfgang Hadel, DK2OM, reported recently.

Sputnik, a Russian government-controlled radio service, cited a Rossiiskaya Gazeta newspaper report that six OTH radar installations will operate in the region. Deputy Defense Minister Dmitry Buklgakov, who visited the construction site said a runway capable of handling all types of combat aircraft was simultaneously being reconstructed nearby, the report continued. Other reports have indicated that similar systems will be deployed in the Far East in 2018. Russia sold its OTH radar technology to China.

OTH radars employ widely separated transmitting and receiving site and can “see” beyond the horizon, the typical limit for ordinary radar. The systems employ antenna arrays of up to 5 kilometers long and 5 meters tall.

— *Thanks for news tip to Frank Smith, WS1MH --ARRL*

Maybe a Solar Minimum Can Be Too Deep for 160 Meters

Propagation observer and NWIDXC member, Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA, recently offered some “deep thoughts” on the Top Band Reflector. As he explained, while less geomagnetic field activity heading into winter bodes favorable 160-meter propagation, more galactic cosmic rays entering our atmosphere could become a factor.

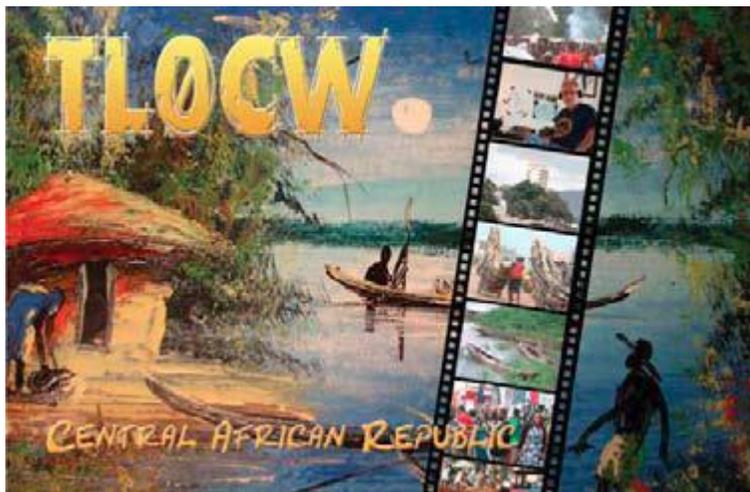
“The Sun’s magnetic field is weakening, probably to the lowest levels in our lifetimes,” Luetzelschwab said in an October 27 post. “With a weak solar magnetic field, more galactic cosmic rays will be able to get into Earth’s atmosphere. We are now seeing unprecedented high neutron counts (neutrons are one of the byproducts of cosmic rays). Since galactic cosmic rays are mostly very energetic protons, they can get down to low atmospheric altitudes, causing collisional ionization in the D region and lower E region.”

He said a cursory estimate using cosmic ray ionization rates confirms greater ionization in the lower atmosphere, and 160 meters is not too tolerant of more absorption. “Many of us think that ‘solar min is solar min is solar min,’” Luetzelschwab said, “but maybe a solar minimum can be too deep for 160 meters.” He said a good question to ask in the early 2020s may be “How was 160 meters?” Only time will tell, he suggested. — ARRL



TLØCW – A One Man DXpedition to the Central African Republic

Rudi Klos, DK7PE



In search of “where next” for a DXpedition, I regularly survey active DXers for their needed lists on the top band, 160M. Bernd Koch, DF3CB, one of the top DXers in Germany, reported the Central African Republic (CAR) as the last one missing from the African continent. If Bernd needed the Central African Republic (TL) on 160 Meters I could be sure that many others needed this one, too.

Research and preparation

My first investigation showed that Chris Arroman, TLØA, was the only active Amateur in the CAR. He had a very good signal on the higher bands; however, he didn't operate CW and not at all on 80M and 160M. The last 160M operation out of TL took place some 14 years ago, by Alex, TL5A (PA3DZN). Jan Harders, DJ8NK, visited Chris in 2010 and activated TL in RTTY for the first time. Chris works for the French group AREVA, but unfortunately, he left the country a few weeks before my planned arrival in Bangui, CAR's capital.

I processed and forwarded an Amateur Radio license application to the Telecommunications Ministry (ART) in Bangui, which was approved in a timely manner. However, I would only get the license if I transferred the equivalent of US\$260 in local currency to the National Bank in Bangui. My bank in Germany advised me that the handling charges would be almost as high as the sum to be transferred, so Chris, TLØA, kindly loaned me the money for the license fee. The next day I got an email from Bangui with an attached PDF of the TLØCW license.

The biggest problem for a one-man DXpedition today is luggage weight limitations, so I had to ask, “What equipment do I take?” and “With or without linear?” Each extra pound must be paid for and the price varies, depending on the airline, between €30 and €50 per kilo! It soon became obvious that a future one-man DXpedition with a 23-kilo luggage allowance will not allow for carrying a linear without paying huge sums for excess baggage.

Getting there

My flight from Germany to Rome went smoothly, except that in Rome, I was told my luggage could not be loaded onto the Addis Ababa flight; I had to travel to Bangui without any luggage. Great news! I had a license, but no radio; you can imagine my disappointment. Arriving in Bangui, there was no need to go to the baggage claim, but because it was a very small airport, there was no way around it. By chance, I spotted my blue bag with the telescoping poles. How was this possible? If a part of my baggage arrived, could it be that, maybe, the rest of my baggage also arrived? After a few minutes, I had all three pieces. The information in Rome was simply wrong, putting it mildly!

Through Chris, I had arranged for a driver and vehicle for transportation to the hotel, but nobody was there. Later, I learned that the driver was delayed due to an accident on the road. Consequently, I had to pass through the controls by myself, but what was much more stressful was the horde of taxi drivers who were tearing at my luggage from the carriage. There were loud discussions and pulling on the suitcases; everybody wanted to drive me to my destination and by the span of the fares offered, they expected to have a solvent customer. Finally I yelled, “STOP! I will be picked by AREVA,” which made them put the suitcases back. AREVA is the biggest employer in the country and obviously they have at least a little respect on them.

I waited and waited, hoping that my driver would still arrive, but no such luck. After about 20 minutes, the taxi drivers lost interest in me, and it was then that I asked the most serious looking driver, in broken French “Combien?” (How much?) The answer was “\$6,” and I said “Allez!” Thank God it was in the middle of the day! The taxi driver took me with my entire luggage to the Oubangui Hotel. The hotel was a big, 12-storied building, directly on the side of the Oubangui River, looking over to the Democratic Republic of Congo, just on the other side of the river. Unfortunately, all the hotel’s balconies faced south; there weren’t even windows facing north. Then there was a hill, which rose about 300 meters north of the building up to an elevation of more than 600 feet.



The Oubangui River with the hotel in the distance.



Rudi, DK7PE, TLØCW, at the controls

The work begins

The 75 kilos of luggage had to be carried up to the 12th floor because the lift was out of order. This became quite challenging due to high humidity and the 30°C temperature, which made me exhausted. I still had daylight and I wanted to tie down at least one 160M sloper right from the top of the building to the north. The manager sent the house electrician to help and, before sunset, the 160M sloper was fixed from an apex of 40 meters down to the water's edge of the Bangui River, ready to use. By then I was hungry, but the hotel's kitchen was not the best. I limited myself to chips and a beer. I checked the bands and 30M was wide open, but, after almost 30 hours without sleep, I was unable to run the pileups without falling asleep. I had to take a 30-minute power nap. I tuned the transceiver to 1825, listened to the noise and slept. Around midnight I woke up because I heard some signals coming through. I jumped to the station and called CQ. It started with RW2A and very soon W4DR appeared in the pileup to be the first NA station calling, followed by many US/VE stations. The conditions were extremely good and, in the course of the night, I easily worked W6 and W7 stations on the West Coast of the USA. I was impressed! How come the conditions were so extremely good?

The Internet was very slow and only temporarily available in the hotel lobby, 12 levels down, but the first e-mails confirmed that we had really loud signals into the USA and Japan. Bernd, DF3CB, gave an essential reason for these outstanding propagations.

My operation on 160M was during a very strong Aurora activity that must have led to this unusual propagation. I remember similar effects some 20 years ago in Brazzaville, Congo. The following days, 160M conditions returned to normal, but all signals out of Europe had a typical pole flutter on all bands. I tell you, a pileup with hundreds of EU stations having such a special sound is a real challenge.

The heat in the room was unbearable at night, but I left the window closed, as there is a real malaria danger in Bangui. The risks right down on the river should not be underestimated. Did I mention that the A/C was out of order? It was the same with the TV and phone. It became clear that the good old days of the former Sofitel Hotel were long since gone.

What concerned me much more was the electricity. Every single minute there were very short power outages and these failures became apparent in the form of a short chirp in my signal. Those outages were so short, however, that my power supply compensated, but there were times the power went out for minutes and, sometimes, even an hour. I hoped my IC735 and the ACOM 1010 would get over this without major problems.

After two days, and some sleep, a routine arose. The station works, the antennas did well and, finally, I found a decent place to eat in the center of Bangui. By the way, it was not advisable to walk around in town away from the main streets. If I needed to walk somewhere, I would do so only during daylight hours and without any valuables. Even a cheap watch, I was told, was better left at the hotel.

Beyond the radio

There is no real sightseeing in Bangui, except for the ostentatious concrete monuments built by former President Bokassa. I admired them as I passed by in a taxi. I'd rather have taken pictures of the hustle and bustle in the streets, but that was not recommended.

Before I left for Bangui, I announced myself by email to Mr. Weinstabel, the German Embassy representative in the country. The embassy was closed down some 10 years ago and Mr. Weinstabel is the only representative of Germany and Austria left in CAR. Through him, I saw a little of the town and took some pictures. I never would have done that alone.



All bands were open and I could check the bands, up and down, just like I did in the old days. Soon the first stations reported a “full house” with nine bands contacted. I realized that the “European wall” was more impenetrable than ever and I knew countless Japanese and American stations were calling in vain. With European signals of S9 plus 30dB, they did not have the slightest chance to be heard. “Please QRX EU” gave me time for one or two QSOs and then the first “When EU?” was heard. I needed to find a more elegant way to give the DX stations 10.000km plus a chance. I tried the long path into JA and USA. It should have worked, right? Though the path was almost three times longer, in between were only vast amounts of water.

The south-facing balcony allowed me to install my Jumper Beam which looked precisely in Japan’s direction and, later, into the W6/W7 area. Unfortunately, the hotel absorbed signals around 50dB. The first weak JA signals came

fluttering over the South Pacific, they got louder and some were well over S9. Excellent! In the afternoon, I moved the beam to the LP W6 and W7. Some signals were very loud but no real pileups resulted. I worked one station, then the next, with pauses in between.

Winding down

The next day, I pointed my Jumper Beam to the north using the fire escape ladder to fix it to, and I worked up to 160 to 180 QSOs per hour. On the morning of 2 November the pileup on 80M ended while the solar noise increased. W8CCI was the last station worked before the aeriels needed to be taken down. Only the electrician had roof access, but I dared not walk on the thin corrugated sheet roof. I wound up my aeriels and coaxial cables then packed the station in air cushion foil. About midday I departed to the airport.

There was still a small challenge that waited me at the airport. I was told that Jan and Paul had to leave some of their equipment behind when they left the country and it took months to get it back. By chance, Ms. Becker, a German lady I had met through Mr. Weinstabel, was booked on the same flight I was to Addis Ababa and gave me a lift to the airport. She said that the policemen in the capital know her very well and, with pride and a mischievous smile, she told me that policemen call her the “Madame of Bangui.” I am convinced that they have the highest respect for the “Madame” because she knows most of the ministers in person.

Having her by my side, knowing the people and speaking the language was good for me. I had too much luggage and the security people discovered odd cables and devices in my suitcase, but it was no problem for her. She explained everything to the security personnel, with a little smile, and they even apologized for asking. I was impressed!

Contributions

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The Author

Rudi Klos, DK7PE is a long time and well traveled Dxr having visited 157 DXCC entities and operated out of 136 of them. The last one was 1A0KM from S.M.O.M. in January 2014. He focuses on countries most wanted in CW (Morse code) and especially on the low bands like 40, 80 and 160m. For this purpose he has designed several antenna systems that fit into a suitcase and work well on all HF-bands. One of the designs is the 3 element Jumper Beam made out of wire. It was described in the October 2011 issue of QST Magazine as well as several other magazines. Visit his website : <http://www.roody.de/>



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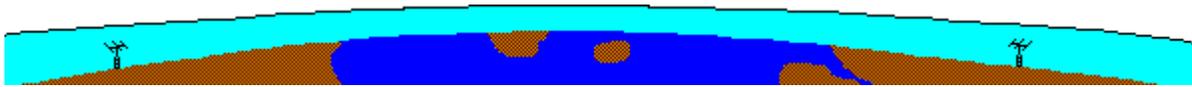
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I want to thank those that have been sending in articles for the newsletter. All items are appreciated.

Don't forget to send in any information you would like to share with the Club members.



Until Next Time,

73

John

W3ML

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