



Volume 3, Issue 3

01/2020

the exchange

**Breaking News—
VP6R DXPedition
story added at the
last minute—pg 30**

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The Prez says.....Tom, NR8Z

Happy New Year and welcome to 2020! Another decade of hamming on tap. I hope that your holidays were enjoyable and you were able to spend time with family and friends. Together, let us resolve that the bottom of the solar cycle does indeed occur early in 2020 and Cycle 25 gets off to a rapid start.

The SWODXA holiday party was a wonderful success. Almost 50 members and family joined together for great Italian food and conversation. A few lucky members and non-members walked away with a prize. Special thanks for such an enjoyable evening go to Mindi, KC8CKW; Richard, KC8RP; Jim, AB8YK and Mike, W8RKO.

With the New Year begins the public activities for the DX Dinner®. The committee that makes it all happen has some new faces. Mike, W8RKO has stepped in as the DX Dinner Chairman. Dwight, K4YJ and Eileen, K3YJ have taken over prize solicitation and collection. Bob, W8RES and Rob, W8MRL are covering the Raffle tickets. My mom told me, “many hands make light work”, so please consider helping in any way you can. Information and tickets can be found [here](#).

The SWODXA meetings will be held at the Marion's Piazza in Mason for January and February and then the Marion's at the Dayton Mall in March, April, May and June. See you there, because if you miss a meeting, you miss a lot!

Bill has curated another fun and informative newsletter. Please check out the perspective from accomplished DXers ZS2EC, CT3MD, a SWL DE0WAF and the Western Kirbati and Nauru DXpedition. There's also much to be found on 60 meters and propagation inside, so enough of my holding you back!



73,
Tom NR8Z

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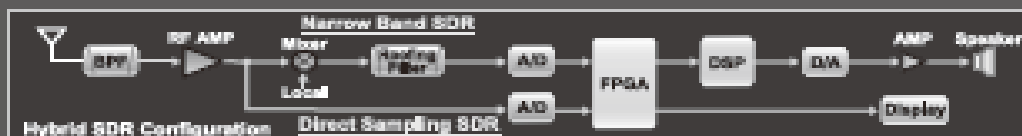
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Interview with ZS2EC—Theunis

I have worked both ZS2EC, the home station of ZS2EC, and ZS2PE, the club station that Theunis manages. Most recently I worked them in the CQWW CW contest. I took a minute to listen to the pileup and found these guys to be first class operators! I certainly thought they would be interesting to learn about. You can contact Theunis

at zs2ec01@gmail.com and check <http://www.zs2pe.co.za/index.html>



AJ8B: How did you first get interested in amateur radio?

ZS2EC: My interest in Ham radio started when I was a citizen band operator in 1980. I had to search for info to get hold of a class that was given on amateur radio exam eventually found it and I took it from there..

AJ8B: When did you get on the air?

ZS2EC: I wrote my exam in 1993 .Wrote 2 times before I passed the Class A operators certificate I then had a ZR callsign that restricted you on certain hf bands after I made a 100 QSOs confirmed or 12wpm CW. I have the full callsign ZS now. I applied for the full callsign in 2000 (ZS).

AJ8B: Do you have a favorite band or mode?

ZS2EC: I find all hf bands interesting My favorite band is 60m now and my favorite modes are FT8 and SSTV. I downloaded an application on my android phone and I am learning CW again from start. Not to old to start learning again!

AJ8B: What time of day and days do you like to operate?

ZS2EC: I normally get up at 0300Z

and start on 60m band FT8 for an hour then move to 40m band for half an hour then at 1200Z. I start at 28mhz for a half an hour and move down from there every half an hour until I get to 40m band. There I stop at 1430Z. Then around 2000Z, I start again on 40m for half an hour then 60m for half an hour and then shut my station down till the next morning and start all over again.

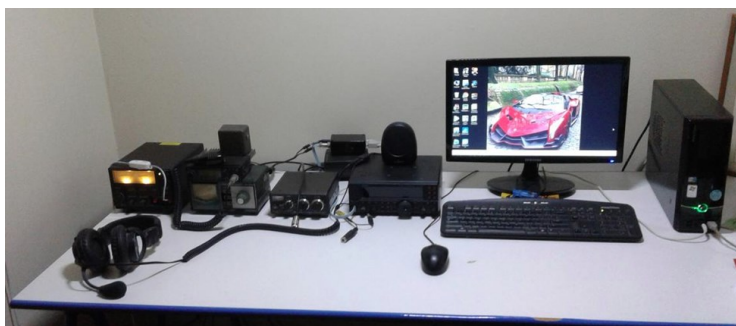
AJ8B: In reviewing your QRZ.com page, I see that you have been very successful with chasing countries and with contests. Any secrets to your success?

ZS2EC: I have learned to be very patient when working DX. My motto if you do not succeed today making that QSO or rare country, tomorrow is another day. When it comes to contest I setup my electronic logging program (N1MM logger) (very user friendly), pick the contest, download the rules, and follow protocol accordingly. I have made mistakes but you learn from it. Never to old to learn!

AJ8B: You are licensed as ZS2EC and are the trustee of the ZS2PE club station. How do you split time between the two?

ZS2EC: I use ZS2EC during the week to make qso,s on whatever mode I choose and use the club callsign during the weekend both callsigns have 100 countries confirmed and have the DX CENTURY CLUB Certificate.

(Cont. on Next Page)



Interview with ZS2EC—Theunis (cont.)

AJ8B: How active is the club station?

ZS2EC: The club callsign ZS2PE is very active during local contest and also in plenty CQWW contest since I have taken it on.

AJ8B: You are an extremely accomplished contesteer. Any tips that you can share?

ZS2EC: I feel when you participate in a contest and you have read the rules accordingly be patient and have good ears and listen carefully because mistake occur What irritates me is that when you participate in a contest some operators ask you what contest is this..grrrr.. looked it up read the rules and go from there

AJ8B: What license levels do you have in South Africa?

ZS2EC: The licenses we have in South Africa are the following

A. Novice license (ZU) restricted on hf not vhf/uhf Power limitation: 20 watt

B. ZR license worked the same as ZS license There is no restrictions Power limitation 1kw

AJ8B: Describe what you are currently using:

ZS2EC: I am current using for vhf a Kenwood IC229 20W.. for uhf a Baofeng uv5r 5w.. for hf a Yaesu Ft450.. antenna is a Off Centre Fed Dipole about 10 meters high.

AJ8B: What advice do you have for those of us trying to break pileups to work DX?

ZS2EC: My advice to breaking pile ups You must be very patient and keep on calling if he works numbers listen and work accordingly. Dx the same. ..if you do not succeed today tomorrow is still there.

AJ8B: Any QSLing hints?

ZS2EC: QSLing -That has changed a lot! Most of the QSLing is being done electronically these days. If you really want a paper QSL, you must go out of your way to get one. It's fantastic when you receive your first one, believe me it is.

AJ8B: What coaching/advice would you give new amateurs?

ZS2EC: This is a difficult question but here goes Live is full of surprises When it comes to amateur radio the best way to go forward from here is take the first step getting your licence and learn from it and then take the next step well if the bug bites continue going forward and never look back it is a very interesting hobby and I tell I love it tremendously.

I thank you Bill for giving me this opportunity to answer questions it was great fun and I enjoyed it

I have never been outside this country in 55 years but someday I will explore this planet of ours

73 and thanks again

De Zs2ec Theunis/Tom



60 Meters—The Channel Band

By Joe, W8GEX

Website: As you know, we have a 60m website, www.60metersonline.com. It was built and is maintained by Mike, a non-ham friend of mine, at no charge to us. Because of recent changes by the provider, Mike had to rebuild the entire site which took a lot of time. He does a great job and we certainly appreciate the time he devotes to our hobby.

It's time to renew our domain name and pay for the site. The renewal is for three years and I am asking for a donation from each of you. I haven't asked for money in quite a while but it is needed now to keep the website active.

This has nothing to do with my *60m DX Newsletter* as I do this as a volunteer to promote 60 meters. I know many of you use this website, so we need everyone to help.

To donate go to www.60metersonline.com and click the "Donate" button at the top of the page.

I, and all other 60m operators, appreciate your generosity.

Joe W8GEX

60 Meters logger page: <http://dxworld.com/60mlog.html>

This page has been around for many years. It was very active at first; recently the usage has slowed down. The purpose was for short messages. To make a post, scroll down on the page and you see a box where you can make your post. After your comments add your callsign so we know who has made the post and hit enter.

IVORY COAST:

Yes we are planning to do 60m

cw /FT8 /FT4 when conditions permit.

Let us hope we can give lot of people a new one there. March 23 to April 3. Kind regards from the team ON7TQ Roger (Teamleader TU2R) <https://tu2r.wordpress.com/>

FIVE MEGS FOR FALKLANDS By Paul G4MWO - Major changes to the Falklands Islands Communications Laws have been announced by the Falklands Islands Communications Regulator. They were published in the official Falklands Islands Gazette on 11 November 2019 and came into force on 15 November 2019 <https://www.regulatorfi.org.fk/legislation>



(Cont. on Next Page)

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60 Meters Update (cont.)

One of these has resulted in the new WRC-15 60m Secondary Allocation becoming available to Falklands Radio Amateurs. The allocation 5351.5 – 5366.5 kHz, with a maximum power of 25W EIRP has been granted for Amateur Radio operations in the islands (see p.6).

<https://www.regulatorfi.org.fk/spectrum/amateur-radio/70-terms-and-conditions-amateur-radio-licence-v2-0-121119-pdf/file>

Falklands Islands Communications Regulator website

<https://www.regulatorfi.org.fk/>

3D2/R - Rotuma Island: 3D2AG, From Antoinette: Due to unexpected changes in boat schedules, he is looking at leaving Fiji earliest 14th Dec. Return early January. Of course, YES on 60m :-)

There will be NO internet access during the expedition; FT8 logs will be uploaded to ClubLog AFTER the expedition and CW/SSB/RTTY contacts will be recorded on paper logs as customary for "Rotuma Operating Schedule" as listed on QRZ.com by bands, frequencies, times (UTC) by regional areas and suggested headings (LP/SP). The QSL information is as follows: Via 3D2AG, using PayPal to address (nyeur@gmail.com) [preferred, safer] / direct for CW/SSB/RTTY and Club-Log's OQRS (FT8/Digimodes only). Donations welcome to assist with generator and fuel procurement for low bands QRO operation. NO LoTW!

GAMBIA C5: Andre, ON7YK as C5YK.

Yes, I'm back in The Gambia, and will be QRV on 60M from half December 2019, till March 16, 2020. Modes will be FT8 and some CW and SSB. But not always, starting from, half of December 2019. LoTW or eQSL. Please NO QSL direct to my home address before March, 2020!!!! Visit his Web page at: <http://www.on7yk.eu/index.html>

Best 73' André C5YK

KH8/S - Swains Island: W8S, March 10-25.

They plan on being on 60m. <https://swains2020.ildxt.eu>.

South Orkney Islands: VP8/VP8DXU - NEW COUNTRY: Their last press release stated they will operate on 60 meters. A big thanks to all that had written them asking for a 60m operation from Feb. 20, 2020 to Mar. 5, 2020.

<https://sorkney.com>.

They have asked the 60m community to support the project with money. It took a lot of discussion to overcome the resistance. Be sure to support this DXpedition.

(Cont. on Next Page)



N3FJP

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60 Meters Update (cont.)

Western Kiribati, Tarawa 2020: T30ET: By Alex 5B4ALX March 18 to April 2.

One operator 2 stations simultaneously confirm 60m activities 1/4 wave vertical and PA. FT8 activities, no need F/H just call non on my QRG and I will work them real time log and map at : <https://www.5b4alx.cloud/t30et-realtime-log/>
<http://www.5b4alx.cloud/t30et-tarawa-atoll-2020/>

5N7Q	ZA/IK2RLM	ZL40L
ZL2CC	5W1SA	VE1YX
5B4AIF	CT9/DL5AXX	XT2AW
9Y4D	T6AA	VR2ZUZ
JW4PUA		

Recent Activity

Upcoming DXpeditions

Rotuma: 3D2R Mid Dec. to early Jan.
 Gambia: C5YK Mid Dec to March 16.
 NEW COUNTRY South Orkney Islands: VP8/VP8DXU - Feb. 20, to Mar. 5. Swains
 W8S: March 10 – 25, 2020
 Western Kiribati: T30ET- March 11, to April 2, 2020.
 Ivory Coast: TU2R March 23 to April 3

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/347995275954755/>
 60m website: www.60metersonline.com

60M DX Facebook: I recently found out that there is an active 60m DX Facebook group. If you are on Facebook, might want to check it out!
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3479952755/>



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Scott Neader KA9FOX*

NOAA Space Weather Prediction Center's latest forecast for Solar Cycle 25 By W3UR—Bernie

The following Solar Cycle 25 Forecast Update is from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Space Weather Prediction Center (SWPC) [website](#).

"The NOAA/NASA co-chaired, international panel to forecast Solar Cycle 25 released their latest forecast for Solar Cycle 25. The forecast consensus: a peak in July, 2025 (+/- 8 months), with a smoothed sunspot number (SSN) of 115. The panel agreed that Cycle 25 will be average in intensity and similar to Cycle 24."

"Additionally, the panel concurred that solar minimum between Cycles 24 and 25 will occur in April, 2020 (+/- 6 months). If the solar minimum prediction is correct, this would make Solar Cycle 24 the 7th longest on record (11.4 years)."

Propagation in 2018 Visualized on 11 Bands With FT8 Spots by Jari Perkiomaki OH6BG

Reprinted with the permission of W3UR—Bernie

I am happy to announce a new service which offers 18,000+ propagation charts for you to explore how signals propagated between two user-selected ITU zones in 2018. The raw spot dataset was received from HamSci, including approximately 8 billion FT8 spots that were collected from sources such as PSK Reporter during the entire year of 2018. There are data from 6 meters to 160 meters. The heavy-lifting, i.e. data processing (incl. pre-processing such as data validation) and data visualization for the charts, has been done by Alex Shovkoplyas, VE3NEA. URL: <https://voacap.com/visualprop>

The charts show the scaled number of spots in different colors over the 24-hour period over the 12 months. Also plotted on the charts are the sunrise and sunset timelines, calculated for "the center of mass" of the callsigns in each ITU zone. This will make it easier, for example, to distinguish enhanced periods of propagation on low bands at sunrise/sunset, something which VOACAP is heavily underpredicting. Furthermore, on the top part of the charts, you will see the development of the planetary A index (Ap) over the year of 2018, and see how increased Ap indices will affect propagation - higher Ap indices are not always a sign of decreased conditions!

I think this unique set of charts will give the ham community all over the world new and surprising insights into HF propagation! If you have questions, please write to jpe@voacap.com.



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Interview with CT3MD—Jose

I have worked CT3MD in and out of contests. Jose is an excellent and accomplished operator and kindly agreed to answer my questions. He can be reached at jmbarcelos@hotmail.com



AJ8B: How did you first get interested in amateur radio?

CT3MD: I am a police officer and after graduating from police, I worked with a radio and enjoyed it and then I became a radio amateur.

AJ8B: When did you get on the air?

CT3MD: I have been on the air since 2000.

AJ8B: Do you have a favorite band or mode?

CT3MD: No, I don't have any favorite bands or modes. I need to work all bands for my DXCC Challenge. I like all.

AJ8B: What time of day and days do you like to operate?

CT3MD: I have no favorite time to operate. I need to work around the clock to be able to do every country in the world. Maybe I like it in my morning to be able to work Pacific area (ZL, VK, JA, HL, BV, etc)

AJ8B: In reviewing your QRZ.com page, I see that you have been very successful with chasing countries and with contests. Any secrets to your success?

CT3MD: No special secrets. It is necessary to work at all hours of the day. In CT3, in order for me to work the Pacific area (the hardest area for me) I need to get up early because it is the best

time to listen to the Pacific, or at sunset. The rest of dxcc I can work anytime.

AJ8B: You are an extremely accomplished contester. Any tips that you can share?

CT3MD: I think talent alone is not everything. We have to work hard. I spend many hours on the radio, get up early and go to bed late. I take the contests to always do something new that I am missing and also to give others the opportunity to work on CT3.

AJ8B: What license levels do you have in Madeira/Portugal?

CT3MD: I have already taken six exams for my license and am on top.



(Cont. on Next Page)

Interview with CT3MD—(cont.)

AJ8B: Describe what you are currently using:

CT3MD: I am using Icom 7600, Expert 1K-FA linear amplifier, for CW I use begali expedition. Antennas: Obtibeam 16-3 (10, 15 and 20), OB7-warc (12 and 17), OB6-6 (6m). Dipoles for 30, 40, 80 and 160.

AJ8B: What advice do you have for those of us trying to break pileups to work DX?

CT3MD: It takes some technique to pierce the pile-up. As I am from Africa, I sometimes call it "africa, africa, africa" and as africa is a rare continent, sometimes they listen to me and give priority. Sometimes I also hear the spaces of silence between the many calls and say my call once or twice.

But the biggest secret is to have a well-located station (no mountains around), little noise, good yagi antennas and some power.

AJ8B: Any QSLing hints?

CT3MD: I only send paper qsl to anyone who asks me.

I have already sent over 100,000 QSL via buro. I usually order direct the dxcc I need.

I very much confirm the cards I receive.

It is an honor for me to know that my card is part of the collection of many amateurs worldwide.

AJ8B: What coaching/advice would you give new amateurs?

CT3MD: Being a ham is a lifelong hobby. You can't be a ham for only 5 years. For those who like dxcc and want to reach the top, will have to follow the hobby forever. Work all bands and



modes to increase the possibility of doing the most.

AJ8B: Thanks for taking the time to answer my questions. Is there anything you would like to share with us?

CT3MD: It was a pleasure sharing this information with you. I would be happy to hear from other hams.

I hope one day to be part of a great expedition on a beautiful and rare island in the ocean. I don't know if I will have the money and availability for it, but I feel like it.

I already lived 5 years in the Azores (CU7MD), between 2010 and 2015 and got a good score. It's great to live on an island and to be a ham. In the islands we have little urban noise and that helps a lot.

73 de José, CT3MD

CWops 10th Anniversary Celebration by Bill, AJ8B

January 2020 marks the 10th anniversary of the CW Operators' Club (CWops). In the ten years of promoting the use of CW in amateur radio communications, the club has grown to nearly 2000 members worldwide. To honour the members' devotion to CW and the efforts of many volunteers toward promoting its use and educating new devotees, CWops members are celebrating with a month-long on-air event in January 2020.

The following rules have been adopted for the event:

- All radio amateurs are welcome to participate
- Timeframe: 0000z 1 January 2020 to 2359z 31 January 2020
- Bands: 160m, 80m, 40m, 20m, 15m, 10m
- Exchange: Signal report. Participants are encouraged to send additional information at their discretion such as name, location and membership number for CWops members
- All QSOs must be made with CWops members using CW.
- Special Club Calls will be activated as well as a number of unique Special Anniversary Celebratory Calls – e.g. K3CWO, GB10CWO or N5A. A complete list of special callsigns is available at <https://cwops.org/cwops-10th-anniversary-celebration/>
- Special club calls and members will call "CQ CALL/CWO" or "CQ CALL CWO"
- Scoring: 1 point for each unique member or Special Club Call worked per band
- Reporting: Logs should be emailed to AnniversaryLogs@CWops.org

- Details of the attractive awards and certificates available will be found on the website

Please see the website for further details, updates and latest news – <https://cwops.org/cwops-10th-anniversary-celebration/>

Celebration participants will be trying to work as many CWops members as possible and it is important that all CWops members identify themselves as members. This can be as simple as identifying as CALL/CWO or CALL CWO, but we urge you to use special callsigns as much as possible.

Sixteen Mini Club callsigns are available to U.S. members. If you wish to use one of those callsigns during the Celebration go to <https://cwomc.org> and fill out the form. These are first come first served, but preference is given to members within the division represented by the callsign. Members outside the U.S. who have a Mini Club available to them should contact the club for information.

Also, for those in the U.S., special event 1x1 callsigns are available to every licensee and there's no better way to draw attention to our celebration than by using a 1x1 callsign during January. To apply for a special event 1x1 callsign, go to <http://www.1x1callsigns.org/>, read the documents there about applying for and using a callsign, and use the online form to apply. You can look in the One-By-One Database linked to the page to determine if your desired 1x1 callsign is available during the event timeframe. Once you apply, there will be no direct notification that use has been granted, and you'll need to return to the page to check.

(Cont. on Next Page)

CWops 10th Anniversary Celebration (cont.)

If you select ARRL as the coordinator it will take from one to three days for them to update the database. If you have any questions about the process, please contact W0TG (N5T) at bill@bgilliland.com for help.

For those outside the U.S., please investigate the availability of special event callsigns in your country. Several non-U.S. members have applied for and been granted permission to use special callsigns, and there are pending applications for others. Please notify W0TG when you apply and when your application is approved so we can keep our list updated.

The CWops 10th Anniversary Celebration is shaping up to be an incredible event! To ensure that it is, we need as many of you as possible to be on the air in January using a CWops Mini Club callsign, a special event callsign, or just identifying yourself as a par-

ticipating CWops member by appending CWO to your callsign as set forth in the rules. We look forward to seeing YOU participate in the celebration!

Call	Group	Call	Group
EG4CWO	EA4OR	G2CWO	England CWO
GI2CWO	Northern Ireland CWO	GM2CWO	Scotland CWO
GW2CWO	Wales CWO	K1K	K1EBY
K3CWO	Atlantic CWO	K4CWT	SE CWO
K8G	KB8GAE	KE2CWO	Hudson CWO
KE6CWO	SW CWO	KK1CWO	Cape Cod CWO
KN5CWO	Delta CWO	KN8CWO	Great Lakes CWO
KT5CWO	West Gulf CWO	KX4CWO	Roanoke CWO
LZ10CWO	LZ1HW	N5A	KT5CWO
N5T	W0TG	N0CWO	Midwest CWO
OL10CWO	OK1RR, OK1TN	PG10CWO	PG4I
SF10CWO	SM6CUK	VC3CWO	VE3NNT
W1CWT	New England CWO	W4Y	W7IY
W6CWO	Pacific CWO	W7C	W7SW
W7CWO	NW CWO	W7F	W7SW
W9CWO	Central CWO	W0CWO	Dakota CWO
WY7CWO	Rocky Mtn CWO		



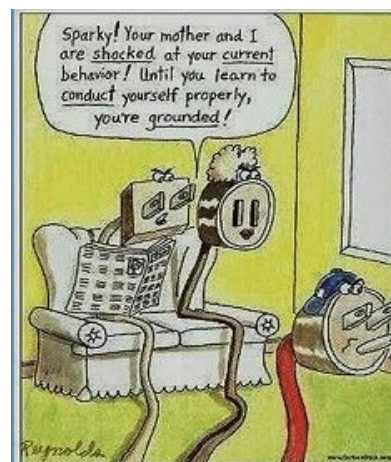
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The Monday Morning Memo...

If you aren't receiving this each Monday, you should!

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ARRL OH Section Updates

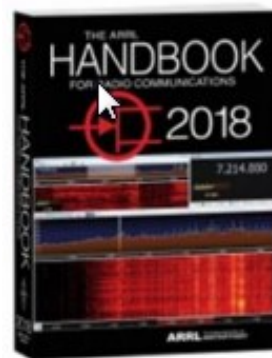
From our ARRL Section Manager, Scott, N8SY

Hey Gang, Do you get updates from your ARRL Ohio Section Manager via email? If not, go to: <http://arrl-ohio.org/handbook.html> and get registered.

What's the catch? I want to get everyone checking in to the Ohio Section website as often as possible, and in order to register each month, you have to visit the website often! There's nothing else to it. I pay all expenses, and from time to time, I Give Away more than just a Handbook. And, you'll never know just what months will be those special times that I will have more than just a Handbook to Give Away!!

Did you see the ad from ARRL recently? Well, they liked my idea so much that they've copied it. Yup, they were giving away a Handbook too!

Many of you ask me just how do I know when the drawing is on? Well, that's easy all you need to do is check in on the Ohio Section Website on a regular basis and watch for the big RED Arrow that will appear on the left side of the page. This is the sign that the drawing is on and you need to get registered. So, keep a sharp eye out on the website and check in often!
<http://arrl-ohio.org>



DX Engineering—We're All Elmers Here!



Email our team of active Elmers at Elmers@DXEngineering.com for technical advice and assistance on finding the right gear for your shack.

Western Kiribati & Nauru

September 5—September 23, 2019

As a sponsor, SWODXA gets articles released at the same time they are sent to other publications. However, we have a quicker turn around so this may be the first time you are able to read about this DXPedition. This is Part 1.



Since our last expedition to 3C3W & 3C0W one year and four months have passed. During this time, I worked on different projects, however, that wasn't successful because we couldn't receive operating licenses and/or had some other difficulties for successful expedition.

In summer 2019 I decided to carry out



expedition to Nauru (#54 Most wanted). Flight to Nauru from Latvia is very long distance and expensive. Because of this reason and to be more efficient I opted to visit 2nd DX entity as well – West-

ern Kiribati (#68 Most wanted). Expedition was set for September 2019 so we had 3 months for preparations.

First task after receiving license was to book flight tickets for the team. Europe's large airline companies recently have downsized baggage limitations per passenger and for every additional weight unit they charge extra and this increases expeditions expenses significantly. To Brisbane in Australia I chose Etihad airlines and

continued by Nauru airlines to Nauru with connection flights in middle. To both companies I submitted expedition support applications for sponsorship of additional 50 kg baggage. Nauru airlines decision to support us was positive, but Etihad airways declined. So, from Riga to Brisbane we had to pay extra for our baggage to both ways which in the end sums up more than one additional passenger ticket.

Next challenge for this expedition was the booking of hotels and acquiring visas. With Nauru everything went smooth and the visas were granted fast and in time, however, with Kiribati it was quite the opposite – it got delayed till our flight day. The usual response by the authorities was that everything is in process and we should just wait. Just on the last day when being already on the way I received email from the representatives and they told me that because of bank transfer charges they received only 145 AUD of 160 AUD. They asked which one of our team members should get declined for the visa? I had no opportunity to transfer additional funds right away and this would also take some time to be processed.

This was also risky because we could have been restricted to board the plane without our visas on hand. In the end, I managed to contact our hotel owner who paid for us these necessary 15 AUD in the ministry's account. Later when being in Brisbane's airport I received visas in my email.

(Cont. on Next Page)

Western Kiribati & Nauru—cont.

For Latvian's the Australian transit visa application process is online – it's necessary to fill out 12 pages and submit 7 documents. I never had fill so much documents to receive visa, not to mention that this is just transit visa. I submitted all necessary documents in time for all team members and three of us received visas the next day. The fourth one was declined after 2 weeks waiting. After submitting documents for 2nd time the visa was granted a week later.

For operating licenses I submitted applications in time and Nauru replied that I will get them only when arriving in the country. When this came through, they told me that I could get only 2 letter suffix callsign and that is the reason why we had to change our desired callsign to C21WW. Nauru also granted 60m band, but Western Kiribati replied that first we have to obtain visas and then only we could apply for licenses. When all of this was done and the T30L license was granted there wasn't included 60m band. Unfortunately, from the 2nd application I submitted I did not receive any response.

Three months for preparations went by fast. Its 4th of September and we meet in Riga airport for our flight: Riga (LAT) – Munich (GER) - Abu Dhabi (UAE) – Brisbane (AU). After more than 24 hours of flight time we are in Brisbane. Next flights are to Tarawa, Kiribati with Nauru airlines. Nauru airlines support with 50 kg additional baggage come in very handy, because our hand luggage consisting of transceivers, PA's and laptops also get weighted.



TEAM

Our previous team consisting of me Juris (YL2GM) and Kaspars (YL1ZF) was joined by Jack (YL2KA), who is also our photographer and graphical designer, and Kristers (YL3JA) who is our new hope for WRTC 2022.

Operators: YL2GM, YL1ZF, YL2KA, YL3JA

Coordinator: Kaspars Pētersons

QSL manager: YL2GN

Webmaster: YL2VW

Graphic designer: YL2KA

Technical advisors: YL3DW

EQUIPMENT

Transceivers: 3x Elecraft K3

Power amplifiers: 3x SPE Expert 1.3K-FA

Antennas:

*160/80/60/40/30m bands – 18m high vertical with capacity hat RA6LBS

*2x 20-10m bands – Spider-beams

*40m bands – 2 phased vertical

*EFHW-8010 (80-10m bands)

*Beverages for receiving

(Cont. on Next Page)

Western Kiribati & Nauru—cont.

EXPEDITION DIARY

Day 1 – Thursday, 5th of September

In early morning at 06.30 local time we land in Kiribati airport where we are greeted by a youngster with a poster from Dreamers guest house (our hotel and QTH for T30L). We load our bags with gear in his car and tie our antennas to the cars roof and continue to drive to our hotel approximately 15 km from the airport. During the way we get acquainted with our driver whose name is Adda and who turns out to be our hotels chef. He will be preparing meals for us during our stay.

After arriving we move into our room and right after that we start to check our hotels surroundings. Yard is not very large and we are only able to set up just one spider---beam antenna, still setting up guy-wires is quite challenging because the yard is only 12x12m and one of the cords has to be attached to an old tree log in the ocean shore. In palm tree next to the yard we hang our EFHW-8010 antenna and pull its wires towards the small islands shore in the lagoon. During the night we have to lower down spider-beam in order not to break it because of the increasing tide in the ocean.



The plan was to set up two stations so we also visited two other nearby hotels, however, none of them suited our needs regarding setting up antennas and the plans for two different stations had to be cancelled.

Day 2 – Friday, 6th of September

After breakfast we fixed guy-wires and erected Spider-beam to its intended heights. We also prepared place behind hotel for low band RA6LBS 18m vertical and we were only able to fix three guy-wires in the beach sands and the fourth had to be fixed in

tide area. The problem was fixing the guy-wire poles in the beachy sands because the poles we prepared and took with us wasn't suited for this ground. We fixed this by finding 1m long wood poles on the site that we hammered in the sands and covered with stones. After midday we finished this vertical montage and felt that we had burned in the hot sun so the remaining antenna installing had to be postponed to early morning when it's a bit chillier. Kaspar is operating and we don't bother him with these works.



(Cont. on Next Page)

Western Kiribati & Nauru—cont.

Day 3 – Saturday, 7th of September

After getting up at 6 am and finishing works with the 2nd spider-beam, around midday we start operating with 2nd station on SSB. Kris-
ters operates in AADX SSB contest on 20 and 15m and Kaspars as usual on CW 20, 17, 15m. After lunch we set up 100m beverage towards



USA with intent to work on 80m during the night, however, the even-

ing comes with an electricity black out and we lose all DXing capabilities. Guest house had a 3kW generator, but the owner wasn't on the site and the mistress had no knowledge how to operate it and also, she could not allow us to work with it. During the night, electricity came back on so we started to operate on low bands mainly with JA and USA, and only some QSOs with EU.

Day 4 – Sunday, 8th of September

Early in the morning before breakfast we take down Beverages and maintain QSO logs. After that we lose electricity again because of the maintenance works after



last night storm damages. On our request guest house staff turned on the generator and on this power we could operate one station with PA and other with transceiver on 100W. In the evening we get back electricity. Propagation is very bad – when operating SSB we can't hear single station and on CW QSOs are also minimal. Some of amateurs have turned to FT8 mode and during this time with bad propagation it was our only chance for operating.



Day 5 – Monday, 9th of September

Propagation does not improve. On higher bands 24 and 28 Mc there is only noise and we cannot do a single QSO. Some progress on 18 Mc where we are able to make some QSOs in CW and FT8 mode. Unfortunately, in SSB we have only a little more than 500 QSOs. We can only hope that the propagation will improve in the second part of expedition in Nauru.

(Cont. on Next Page)

Western Kiribati & Nauru—cont.

Day 6 – Tuesday, 10th of September

We check our statistics and see some improvements with Europe which at this time has 8% of 8700 QSOs. Around midday we lose electricity again and work with generator till the evening.

Today we also drove to Bairiki in order to buy support goods for Hams with hearts charity program. More about this please read Hams with hearts section.

Day 7 – Wednesday, 11th of September

After sending logs we see that we have crossed our 10 000

QSO mark and again the statistics with Europe has improved to 9.8% of total QSOs. We also manage to make our first QSOs on 10 and 12m, mainly with Japan. As this expedition phase approaches its end, we have to start thinking about dismantling antennas and packing for Nauru.

Day 8 – Thursday, 12th of September

In the evening we take down one Spider-beam and 7Mc verticals. During the night we work on low bands with RA6LBS vertical.

Day 9 – Friday, 13th of September

Before breakfast we take down RA6LBS vertical and later around midday we take down last Spider-beam. Till the evening we have to pack

all our gear and get ready for our flight. In total from T30L we have made 13644 QSOs.

In the evening we have celebration dinner and our chef sets table in the garden with different Kiribati national food. The hotel staff is very kind and helpful and we promise that we will refer them other amateur radio expeditors as well. In our opinion this was the most suitable place for amateur radio activity. As it turns out

T30GC also has planned this place for their expedition in October.

Day 10 – Saturday, 14th of September

Our flight to Nauru is scheduled for 11.50am and we land there at 2pm. I call

Menen hotel and the transportation minivan is sent for us. I have booked 2 rooms in this hotel and right away after checking in we start to search the surroundings for setting up antennas. Unfortunately, this hotel was not suited for our operations – the rooms were in the middle part of hotel and there was no place for our antennas. On the island there is three more hotels and we head to look for them. In the end, most suitable is Budapest hotel located right on the ocean beach on the North side of the island. Hotel staff is very helpful and we rent 2 rooms there. After today's activities we are very tired so get some sleep.

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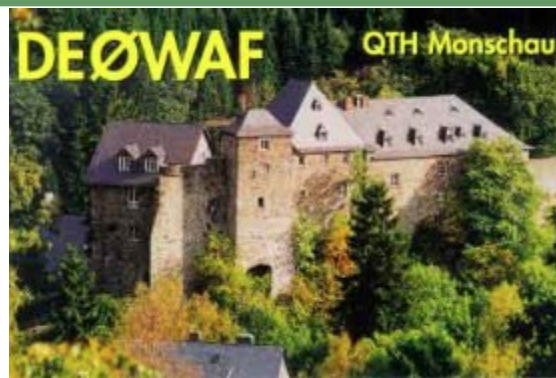


Western Kiribati & Nauru—cont.



German SWL Station Chats about SWLing—Walter—DE0WAF

I receive several SWL cards with each batch from the Buro. However, this one was different. It was a legit, standard, QSL card and the station had a QRZ.com page. I had to contact this station and get a few questions answered. Enjoy..



Dear OM Bill,
I'll try to answer your questions as follows:

AJ8B: How did you first get interested in SWL?

DE0WAF: As a schoolboy, I would listen to foreign radio (MW and SW) under my bed-cover at night

AJ8B: When did you start being an SWL?

DE0WAF: In 1972 I gained membership in DARC, the German ARRL

AJ8B: Do you have a favorite band or mode?

DE0WAF: All SW bands (1.8-28mc), all modes (CW, phone and digital), now digital modes. (earlier RTTY, then PSK, QPSK, then JT65, now FT8 and FT4)

AJ8B: What time of day and days do you like to listen?

DE0WAF: Now that I'm retired (70 yrs old), any time I like and can.

AJ8B: Describe what you are currently using:

DE0WAF: RX: NRD-525G, Kenwood R-5000, SDR Perseus - ant: Titan DX

AJ8B: You have a German call sign and a QRZ.com page. Are you also an amateur radio operator?

DE0WAF:

Newer German SWL id's are

DE1AAA - DE9ZZZ SWL, DE0AAA - DE0QZZ and DE0RAA-DE0ZZZ Deutsche Empfangsmeister,

i.e. SWL and WAC at all 5 classic SW-bands, confirmed by checked qsl cards

i.e. I'm not a licensed amateur, just SWL

AJ8B: Are you working towards awards?

DE0WAF: Yes

AJ8B: If so, what are they and what have you achieved so far?

DE0WAF: DARC Toplist (Hall of Fame DARC), 340 confirmed entities, WAE Trophy (6 bands), over 300 EPC awards etc. etc.

AJ8B: If someone were to be interested in becoming an SWL, how would they go about it?

DE0WAF: By visiting as many radio amateurs in the neighbourhood as possible because the hobby of amateur radio is very manifold, more educational station are necessary

AJ8B: Is there any other information you would like to share with us?

DE0WAF: I think I'm not a representative SWL, but the hobby is very great

73 Walter (DE0WAF)

Who's on CW?

Thought you would enjoy this transcript of a conversation between K4ZLE and me about an upcoming DXpedition. (This first appeared in The West Coast DX Bulletin, edited by Hugh Cassidy., WA6AUD. Paul, VE1DX, obtained rights to all of the West Coast DX Bulletin columns and has given us permission to reprint. Thanks Paul!)

K4ZLE: Well Bill, I'm guess you're going to go on the DXpedition with the guys.

AJ8B: Jay, if you're organizing this operation, you must know all the guys.

K4ZLE: I certainly do.

AJ8B: Well you know I've never met the guys, so you'll have to tell me their names, and then I'll be familiar with them.

K4ZLE: Oh, I'll tell you their names, but you know it seems to me they give these DXpeditioners now-a-days very peculiar names.

AJ8B: You mean funny names?

K4ZLE: Strange names, pet names. Well, let's see, we have on the DXpedition, Who's on CW, What's on phone, I Don't Know is on Digital Modes . . .

AJ8B: That's what I want to find out.

K4ZLE: I say Who's on CW, What's on phone, I Don't Know's on DIGITAL MODES.

AJ8B: Are you the QSL manager?

K4ZLE: Yes.

AJ8B: You gonna be the pilot station too?

K4ZLE: Yes.

AJ8B: And you don't know the fellows' names.

K4ZLE: Well I should.

AJ8B: Well then who's on CW?

K4ZLE: Yes.

AJ8B: I mean the fellow's name.

K4ZLE: Who.

AJ8B: The guy on CW.

K4ZLE: Who.

AJ8B: The guy sending Morse code.

K4ZLE: Who.

AJ8B: The guy with the key . . .

K4ZLE: Who is on CW!

AJ8B: I'm asking you who's on CW.

K4ZLE: That's the man's name.

AJ8B: That's who's name?

K4ZLE: Yes.

AJ8B: Well go ahead and tell me.

K4ZLE: That's it.

AJ8B: That's who?

K4ZLE: Yes.

PAUSE

AJ8B: Look, do you have a CW man?

K4ZLE: Certainly.

AJ8B: Who's sending CW?

K4ZLE: That's right.

AJ8B: When you send the CW man's QSL cards to him every month, who gets them?

K4ZLE: Every one of them.

AJ8B: All I'm trying to find out is the fellow's name on CW.

K4ZLE: Who.

AJ8B: The guy that gets . . .

K4ZLE: That's it.

AJ8B: Who gets the QSL cards . . .

K4ZLE: He does, every one of them. Sometimes his XYL comes down and picks them up.

AJ8B: Who's XYL?

K4ZLE: Yes.

(Cont. on Next Page)

Who's on CW—cont.

PAUSE

K4ZLE: What's wrong with that?

AJ8B: All I wanna know is when the CW op fills out the card, how does he sign his name?

K4ZLE: Who.

AJ8B: The guy.

K4ZLE: Who.

AJ8B: How does he sign . . .

K4ZLE: That's how he signs it.

AJ8B: Who?

K4ZLE: Yes.

PAUSE

AJ8B: All I'm trying to find out is what's the guys name on CW.

K4ZLE: No. What is our phone operator.

AJ8B: I'm not asking you who's on phone.

K4ZLE: Who's on CW.

AJ8B: One mode at a time!

K4ZLE: Well, don't change the operators around.

AJ8B: I'm not changing nobody!

K4ZLE: Take it easy, buddy.

AJ8B: I'm only asking you, who's the guy on CW?

K4ZLE: That's right.

AJ8B: Ok.

K4ZLE: Alright.

PAUSE

AJ8B: What's the guy's name on CW?

K4ZLE: No. What is on phone.

AJ8B: I'm not asking you who's on phone.

K4ZLE: Who's on CW.

AJ8B: I don't know.

K4ZLE: He's on DIGITAL MODES, we're not talking about him.

AJ8B: Now how did I get on DIGITAL MODES?

K4ZLE: Why you mentioned his name.

AJ8B: If I mentioned the DIGITAL MODES man's name, who did I say is operating DIGITAL MODES?

K4ZLE: No. Who's is operating CW.

AJ8B: What's on CW?

K4ZLE: What's on phone.

AJ8B: I don't know.

K4ZLE: He's on DIGITAL MODES.

AJ8B: There I go, back on DIGITAL MODES again!

PAUSE

AJ8B: Would you just stay on DIGITAL MODES and don't go off it.

K4ZLE: Alright, what do you want to know?

AJ8B: Now who's operating DIGITAL MODES?

K4ZLE: Why do you insist on putting Who on DIGITAL MODES?

AJ8B: What am I putting on DIGITAL MODES?

K4ZLE: No. What is on phone.

AJ8B: You don't want who on phone?

K4ZLE: Who is on CW.

AJ8B: I don't know.

Together: DIGITAL MODES!

PAUSE

AJ8B: Look, you gotta any satellite operators?

K4ZLE: Sure.

AJ8B: The RS-12 guy's name?

K4ZLE: Why.

AJ8B: I just thought I'd ask you.

K4ZLE: Well, I just thought I'd tell ya.

AJ8B: Then tell me who's the RS-12 Satellite operator.

(Cont. on Next Page)

Who's on CW—cont.

K4ZLE: Who's operating CW.

AJ8B: Stay with the satellite guys!!! I want to know what's the guy's name on RS-12?

K4ZLE: No, What is on phone.

AJ8B: I'm not asking you who's on phone.

K4ZLE: Who's on CW!

AJ8B: I don't know.

Together: DIGITAL MODES!

PAUSE

AJ8B: The RS-12 operator's name?

K4ZLE: Why.

AJ8B: Because!

K4ZLE: Oh, he's our PSK-31 op.

PAUSE

AJ8B: Look, You gotta 160 man on this DXpedition?

K4ZLE: Sure.

AJ8B: The 160 guy's name?

K4ZLE: Tomorrow.

AJ8B: You don't want to tell me today?

K4ZLE: I'm telling you now.

AJ8B: Then go ahead.

K4ZLE: Tomorrow!

AJ8B: What time?

K4ZLE: What time what?

AJ8B: What time tomorrow are you gonna tell me who's the 160 operator?

K4ZLE: Now listen. Who is not on top band.

AJ8B: I'll break your arm if you say who's on CW!!! I want to know what's the 160 guy's name?

K4ZLE: What's on phone.

AJ8B: I don't know.

Together: DIGITAL MODES!

PAUSE

AJ8B: Gotta packet man?

K4ZLE: Certainly.

AJ8B: The packet guy's name?

K4ZLE: Today.

AJ8B: Today, and tomorrow's on 160.

K4ZLE: Now you've got it.

AJ8B: All we got is a couple of days on the DXpedition.

PAUSE

AJ8B: You know I'm a packet operator too.

K4ZLE: So they tell me.

AJ8B: I get behind the rig to do some fancy packet work, Tomorrow's on 160 and a Big Gun gets on the air. Now the Big Gun connects to me on packet. When he connects, me, being a good packet man, I ask him to call us on CW.

So I tell him the 20-meter frequency where the CW operator is, and he calls who?

K4ZLE: Now that's the first thing you've said right.

AJ8B: I don't even know what I'm talking about!

PAUSE

K4ZLE: That's all you have to do.

AJ8B: Is to tell the guys to call us on CW.

K4ZLE: Yes!

AJ8B: Now who's gonna answer them?

K4ZLE: Naturally.

PAUSE

AJ8B: Look, if they call us on CW, somebody's gotta answer them. Now who does it?

K4ZLE: Naturally.

(Cont. on Next Page)

Who's on CW—cont.

AJ8B: Who?

K4ZLE: Naturally.

AJ8B: Naturally?

K4ZLE: Naturally.

AJ8B: So they QSY to 20 and call Naturally.

K4ZLE: No they don't, they call Who.

AJ8B: Naturally.

K4ZLE: That's different.

AJ8B: That's what I said.

K4ZLE: You're not saying it . . .

AJ8B: I tell them to call Naturally.

K4ZLE: You tell them to call Who.

AJ8B: Naturally.

K4ZLE: That's it.

AJ8B: That's what I said!

K4ZLE: You ask me.

AJ8B: I would tell them to call who?

K4ZLE: Naturally.

AJ8B: Now you ask me.

K4ZLE: You tell them to call Who?

AJ8B: Naturally.

K4ZLE: That's it.

AJ8B: Same as you! Same as YOU!!! I tell them to call who. Whoever it is busts their call and the guy calls on phone. Who picks up the call and tells What it's busted. What tells I Don't Know to listen for him on DIGITAL MODES. I Don't Know gets the call right Tomorrow. He's in the log on all three modes. Another guy calls Because. Why? I don't know! He's on DIGITAL MODES and I don't give a darn!

K4ZLE: What?

AJ8B: I said I don't give a darn!

K4ZLE: Oh, that's our Pactor man.

AJ8B walks away.....



VK4YB to NO3M on 630m and 2200m

Carl Luetzelschwab K9LA k9la@arrl.net

(Reprinted with permission of K9LA—This article originally appeared on Carl's website—www.k9la.us)



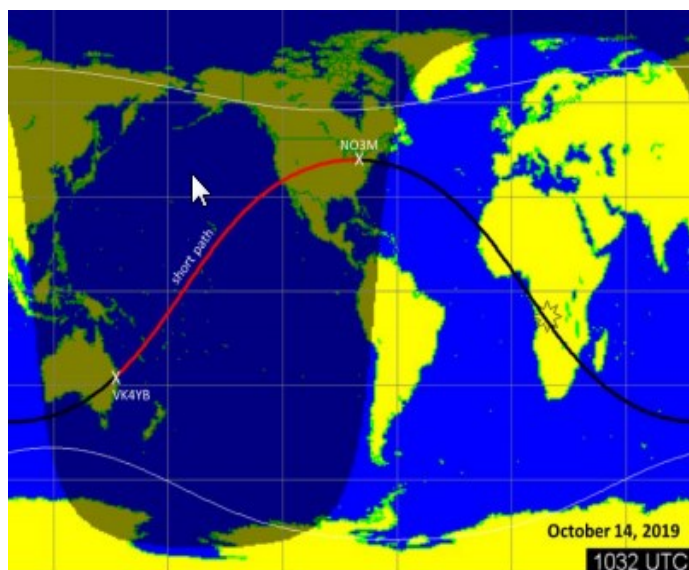
As reported at <http://www.arrl.org/news/new-630-meter-distance-record-claimed>, Eric NO3M and Roger VK4YB completed a 630-Meter QSO on October 14 of this year at 1032 UTC using the JT9 mode. This is a new distance record (14,979 km) on our newest MF (medium frequency 300-3000 KHz) band.

Two weeks later I received an e-mail from NO3M saying he copied VK4YB on 2200-Meters using the WSPR mode on October 28 from 1130–1148 UTC, and a follow-up e-mail a couple days later saying he again copied VK4YB on 2200m on WSPR on October 31 from 1138–1156 UTC. NO3M believes these receptions are a new distance record on our only LF (low frequency 30-300 KHz) band.

Let's take a look at this 630-Meter QSO and the 2200-Meter receptions. My first thought for both of these events was of Bob NZ5A's August 2019 QST article titled "Optimizing Propa-

gation on 630 and 2200 Meters." NZ5A monitored non-directional beacons (NDBs) from 190-535 KHz for three years. His Figure 1 showed that the best times were around his sunrise and sunset, and Figure 2 showed the peak month was October, with the other fall and winter months about half as good. These recent VK4YB-to-NO3M events followed NZ5A's data.

630-Meter QSO—Shown is a map of the path of the 630-Meter QSO on October 14 at 1032 UTC (W6ELProp). Since this is 630-Meters, it is assumed that the short path (the red line) in darkness is the path that enabled this QSO (as opposed to the black line which is the long path in lots of daylight). An important question is "what is the hop structure for this 14,979 km QSO?" Was it multi-hop? If so, that would probably involve many, many hops since 475 KHz doesn't get very high into the ionosphere – even at very low elevation angles. Ionospheric absorption would add up quickly – and the result may be prohibitive. Perhaps ducting is involved – like on 160-Meters. There's a valley in the electron density at night just above the E region peak in which we believe 160-Meter RF ducts, and it sounds reasonable to expect that the same could happen on 630m. To try to sort this out, I used Propab Pro V3 (from Solar Terrestrial Dispatch) to do ray traces from VK4YB to NO3M. Unfortunately ionospheric absorption was significant on a multi-hop path, and no evidence of ducting showed up [note 1].



(Cont. on Next Page)

VK4YB to NO3M on 630m and 2200m (cont.)

But there may be a problem with the model of the ionosphere in Proplab Pro. From other ray tracing work on low frequencies (specifically, VY2ZM's reception of the 100 Watt GB3SSS beacon at Poldhu in December 2006 on 1.960 MHz as discussed in my Propagation column in the December 2007 issue of World Radio – both VOACAP and Proplab Pro said VY2ZM should not have heard GB3SSS by a long shot), I've always believed that the ionosphere model has too many electrons per cubic meter in the lower ionosphere [note 2]. The result of modeling would be shorter hops with more ionospheric absorption, and a duct would be tough to get into due to a higher elevation angle needed to get through the nighttime E region peak.

So for now, I don't know if the path was multi-hop or involved ducting. If I had to make a guess, I'd say ducting was definitely involved to minimize ionospheric absorption, with sunrise/sunset enhancements just like on 160-Meters.

2200-Meter Receptions—Here's a map of the path of the 2200-Meter receptions on October 28 at 1148 UTC (again, thanks W6ELProp). 1148 UTC is sunrise at NO3M.

Here are the times and SNRs (signal-to-noise ratios) for the VK4YB receptions at NO3M.



date	UTC	SNR in dB	comments
28-Oct	1130	-23	receptions began 18 minutes before sunrise and ended at sunrise
	1132	-23	
	1136	-22	
	1138	-22	
	1142	-24	
	1144	-24	
31-Oct	1148	-25	receptions began 13 minutes before sunrise and ended 5 minutes after sunrise
	1138	-27	
	1140	-25	
	1142	-25	
	1150	-26	
	1154	-26	
	1156	-26	

The SNRs are remarkably constant. But that might be expected as 137 KHz only gets up to 65-70 km – the bottom of the ionosphere. Thus there is some immunity to the daily variation of the lower ionosphere and space weather (that's a good reason why the worldwide navigation system LORAN-C was down at 100 KHz). And 65-70 km is below where most absorption occurs at night (up around 90 km).

Before discussing multi-hop and ducting, we should look at ground wave propagation. With most of the path over salt water, this is an ideal scenario for ground wave on very low frequencies. Using the old DOS program GRWAVE, the loss for a 15,000 km path is several hundred dB – this is extremely prohibitive even with the WSPR SNR decode capability. So I believe groundwave is out of the picture for these receptions.

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VK4YB to NO3M on 630m and 2200m (cont.)

As for ducting, it's a struggle to understand how 137 KHz can get through the E region – even at night and at solar minimum [note 3]. If this path was strictly north-south (along a magnetic field line), then it would be interesting to look at magnetospheric ducting. But the path isn't north-south, so this leaves multi-hop as the possible mode.

Again, I used Proplab Pro V3 to do ray tracing on 137 KHz. Unfortunately ionospheric absorption was again significant on a multi-hop path [note 4]. But my comments about too many electrons in the model down low would be applicable here, too.

Summary— Our sophisticated propagation tools say the 630m QSO and the 2200m receptions shouldn't have happened. But they did – so either there's a new mode of propagation on these low frequencies or our models don't represent the lower ionosphere very well (which is not surprising as it's tough to measure the D region to determine its typical magnitude and variability). If I was a betting man, I'd bet on our lower ionosphere model not being correct.

Notes

- 1) The best scenario on 475 KHz was a very low angle ordinary-wave mode that still put the signal about 78 dB below my assumed quiet rural noise environment (in 2500 Hz) with optimistic antenna gains, the decode capability of JT9 and the use of a receive antenna to improve the SNR. The RF only got up to 70 km and it took 9 hops, with each hop being around 1660 km.
- 2) In the model of the ionosphere in Proplab Pro V3 (the 2007 version of the International Reference Ionosphere), the E region critical frequency foE at the NO3M end of the path at night at solar minimum is around 480 KHz (0.48 MHz). In *Ionospheric Radio* (Kenneth Davies, 1990, published by Peter Peregrinus Ltd), M. Leftin gives an equation for foE at midnight that works out to around 360 KHz (0.36 MHz). Thus the model may have almost twice the number of electrons per cubic meter compared to what may be closer to reality.
- 3) Even if foE is 360 KHz (0.36 MHz), all 137 KHz RF would be refracted back to Earth (regardless of the elevation angle). So how would 137 KHz get through the nighttime E region peak to the electron density valley above?
- 4) The best scenario on 137 KHz was a very low angle ordinary-wave mode that still put the signal about 46 dB below my assumed quiet rural noise environment (in 2500 Hz) with optimistic antenna gains, the decode capability of WSPR and the use of a receive antenna to improve the SNR. The RF only got up to 65 km and it took 10 hops, with each hop being around 1500 km.

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The VP6R DXPedition From a Rookie's Point of View

by Mike Cizek W0VTT

Most DXers probably dream about going on a DXPedition someday. I know I did, but never thought I'd get the chance to do it. For me, the next best thing was going to Dayton and the DX conventions where I could rub elbows with the "Big Boys" who go to all these strange faraway places. I enjoyed getting to know several the guys who went to top ten countries, and really enjoyed the rare occasion when one would call me by name in a big pile up. After chasing DX for 30 years, I was content with my place in the DX game and had stopped thinking about ever operating from someplace rare or exotic.

Receiving an email from Ralph Fedor K0IR in September of 2018 inviting me to the VP6R team was quite a shock. Ralph explained that he wanted to do a trip to someplace fun with a team that combined some seasoned DXPeditioners with some new folks like me. I emailed back immediately expressing my thanks, but also expressing my doubt that the plan would be approved by the family comptroller. The shock from receiving Ralph's email was nothing compared to my wife giving her blessing to the trip: "I think you should go." After a few emails and phone calls, I was added to the team. Learning who the other team members were impressed me to no end. These were the guys I had worked from all over the world; the guys I looked up to and respected. Now I was going to go out to play radio with them. The experienced team members were mainly from the previous year's 3Y0Z operation and they wanted to go someplace a little nicer than Bouvet. Almost every email Ralph sent out ended with "...let's have some fun", and that became the

motto of our DXPe-

dition. Our team email reflector was named "No-Ice Island". The wheels were turning...

We were soon trading planning messages on our team email reflector. I always knew there was a lot of preparation required, but for the first time was getting an inside look at the details. I had little or no experience in most of the requisite subject areas but found one place where I felt able to contribute: fund raising. I know how to type and send emails so with a little direction from Ralph, I took on this task. If you are reading this in your DX club newsletter, your club was one of our contributors. Thank you!

Other team members contributed in their areas of expertise. K0IR kept contact with the folks on Pitcairn, Nigel Jolly of the RV Braveheart, the licensing authorities in New Zealand, and kept tabs on the rest of us. Craig K9CT took care of assembling, testing, and networking the radios, computers, and amplifiers. He was also our treasurer and QSL manager. George N4GRN runs a construction company and knows about international shipping and customs. He handled this area and calculated that we would need to have all of our gear ready and packed in a sea container by 1 June. We all had plenty to do, and it was still over a year before we would leave. I kept typing emails and sending them to every DX club I could find.

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The VP6R DXPedition—cont.

Most of our equipment was from the 3Y0Z operation. It was still packed in the sea container from Bouvet and was sitting in K9CT's company parking lot in Peoria IL. Some of the team gathered there in December 2018 to do a quick inventory and a few of us went in March 2019 to assemble and test the EME antennas. The weekend before Dayton most of the US team members assembled in Peoria to load the container. Our task was to unload the 40' container from the Bouvet trip, do a complete inventory and assessment of everything, decide what we needed to take to Pitcairn, and pack it properly in a 20' container. We also needed a comprehensive itemized listing of what equipment was in each box in the container. Two days later we were finished. George almost wore out his laptop typing in every item as we packed and loaded it. The container was sealed and would be picked up in a few days to begin its journey. More than a few cold 807s were hoisted in celebration that evening. I was getting my first taste of DXPedition team fellowship. This is going to be a fun trip.

All our equipment was on its way, but we still had plenty to do in preparation. Ralph was still finalizing details of our stay on the island and trying to get permission to operate 60 meters; a first from VP6. He found amazing accommodations for us; one of the islanders agreed to house and feed us for a very reasonable fee. Check out Pitcairn on Google maps, look for Andy's Pizzeria, and you can see where we stayed. Look at the terrain view and you can see our take off angle to NA, EU (both NE) and JA (NNW). It was an amazing site. We also received permission to operate from the old

commercial radio station ZBP, just a short walk from Andy's house. We would be operating from what were probably the best two locations on the island. Glenn W0GJ was coordinating our travel and lodgings en route. We were getting close to departure.

There were a few changes to the team during the year from initial planning to departure due to work, family, or medical issues. Real life has a nasty habit of interfering with our ham radio plans. The real shock came just a few days before our departure when our team leader KOIR told us he had a medical issue and would not be able to go with us. Ralph immediately named Glenn W0GJ our new team leader.

Glenn picked up the reins, kept us moving ahead, and we hardly missed a beat. Our final team was now EA3HSO, EY8MM, JR4OZR, K0PC, K9CT, K9NW, N4GRN, N6HC, SM5AQD, W0GJ, W0VTT, W6IZT, and W8HC. It was time to go.

Did I mention that this was my first DXPedition? I'm not a seasoned traveler and was more than a little nervous about the trip. Fortunately, I had company every step of the way. On Saturday afternoon 12 October, W0GJ and I met in Rochester MN to take the shuttle bus to the Minneapolis airport. There we met K0PC and K9CT; the four of us would all be on the same flight to Los Angeles. In LA, we met most of the rest of the team and were all on the same flight to Tahiti. We landed early Sunday morning and walked across the street to the Tahiti Airport Motel where we met the remaining two team members.

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The VP6R DXPedition—cont.

JR4OZR and SM5AQD were waiting for us in the motel lobby. Since there is only one flight a week from Tahiti to the Gambier Islands where we meet the Braveheart, we allowed an extra day, just in case there were any delays. We now had an extra day to play tourist in Tahiti and everyone headed in to town for the day.

Glenn called a team meeting for Monday morning at the motel so we could discuss our arrival and set up plans. He stressed the need to get set up quickly since we were arriving on Thursday morning and there was a large rain storm forecast for the weekend. Tuesday morning, we left Tahiti on the four-hour flight to Totegegie in the Gambier Islands. After landing at the VERY small airport (one gate, one plane), we took a short ferry boat ride to Mangareva Island where we boarded the Braveheart.

The legendary RV Braveheart! This ship had been there and done that, all over the southern hemisphere. I had seen the pictures and read & heard the stories, and now I was finally getting a chance to board her. Matthew Jolly, the captain, welcomed us aboard. He knew many of the team members from their earlier voyages with him; the greetings were warm and heartfelt. Matt introduced us to the crew, and to his wife Rachel and their son Finn, who were along for the ride. Three-year-old Finn wasn't quite sure about these crazy ham operators at first, but he finally decided we were OK. I asked him if he was going to be the next captain of the Braveheart, and he very

confidently said no, he was going to be four. After a quick safety briefing, plates of sandwiches from the galley appeared and we had a nice mid-afternoon snack. A short time later, we cast off and were underway. I spent a while exploring the ship, then settled down on one of the upper decks to enjoy the view and the fresh sea air.



We arrived off Pitcairn Island early Thursday morning and sat off shore waiting for the islanders to come out in one of their longboats to bring us to shore. We were all excited now and eager to get ashore and get started.

We were very fortunate that because of the Braveheart's schedule with other charters, our equipment had been placed on to the island a month earlier. ALL our radio gear was there waiting for us. After a short welcome at the dock on Bounty Bay, some of the islanders loaded us on to their ATVs and we headed up the "Hill of Difficulty" to Andy's house.

Once we all arrived at Andy's house, station setup started directly. We had our plan, formulated in our Monday morning meeting, and everyone got right to work. Once again, I was impressed at how quickly things happened. Everybody seemed to know what they were doing and by supper time, we had set up five Yagis for 10-20m, two verticals for 30 and 40m, and four complete, networked stations. K9CT made our first QSO on 30m CW with N7XM at 0200z (6pm local time). VP6R was on the air.

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The VP6R DXPedition—cont.

The next day we set up our low band antennas at ZBP, the old commercial radio station site. Our main project was erecting a 90' (27m) tall vertical for 160 meters; 70' of aluminum tower with 20' of mast tubing and top loading wires. This required the entire team working together. The antenna is mounted on a hinged base and we used a 40' falling derrick to raise it. The biggest folks handled the pull up ropes and pushed up the tower; the rest of us held the guy ropes to guide it up straight; W0GJ directed everyone, telling us when to pull or when to let up. The antenna went up in just a few minutes.

We also installed verticals for 30, 40 & 80 meters and a second 20m Yagi. That first night on 160 meters Nodir EY8MM made over 700 contacts. He came back to Andy's house shortly after sunrise with a big smile on his face, and promptly went to sleep.

Several people had told me "you won't believe the pileups" on the DXPedition. I've been a DXer for 30 years and have been in plenty of big pileups, but never from the DX side. I had been practicing from home mostly by listening in the big pileups on other DX stations and picking out callsigns, and thought I was ready. I wasn't! I like to think I'm a pretty good CW operator, but the pileups on the first few days were just too much for me. I retreated to FT8 and let the more experienced ops handle CW. After a few days, things slowed down a bit and I was able to do better. I now have an even greater respect for the ops who can pick out callsigns quickly and consistently in these huge pileups. Once I got going, operating from the DX side was a real blast. It was nice to get a good rhythm of steady QSOs going and especially rewarding to work friends

from around the world and call them by name in the pileups. It was fascinating to experience propagation from another part of the world. Naturally, we had propagation predictions and most of the team had operated from the south Pacific before, but there were still plenty of surprises. 30 meters was open all over the world most of the night. We would often work all continents within a five-minute period. We had a regular path on 10 and 12 meters to CT, CN, D4, EA, and EA8 for a few hours almost every day. Sometimes these signals were surprisingly loud.

The most interesting opening I experienced was on 12 meters one morning. I was calling CQ on what appeared to be an empty band. Around 1730z (0930 local) I heard a very weak and watery SM2 station. I worked him and was called by a second SM2. The opening spread into OH and southern SM, but not into LA or UA. A little later some North Americans appeared, then some stations from southern EU, then more and more USA until at 1800z the Europeans had disappeared completely. This one wasn't on our propagation prediction charts!

Remember the storm that was forecast for the weekend? It rained sideways for four whole days with wind gusts up to 50 mph. We were pleasantly surprised that our 160m vertical survived, but we lost both 20m beams and an element off the 15m beam. Fortunately, only a few pieces of tubing were bent, and we had spares. Once the storm had passed, we had everything repaired and back in the air in short order. Once again, it was amazing how quickly and efficiently the team worked together.

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The VP6R DXPedition—cont.

No DXPedition report would be complete without some numbers. We made over 82,000 QSOs on all bands 160 through 6 meters. We were pleased to have 21% of our QSOs come from Europe, a very difficult path from the South Pacific. We were also happy to make nearly 900 QSOs on 60 meters and 36 EME QSOs on 6 meters; both were firsts from Pitcairn. For a complete analysis of our operation please see the statistics page on our Clublog DXPedition Chart.

The trip back home was remarkably similar to the trip out to Pitcairn, but with greatly different feelings. Going out was filled with anticipation, excitement, and more than a little trepidation; I really didn't know what to expect. Going home was mostly gratitude for having such a wonderful experience. There was also a bit of regret at having to leave such

a beautiful place, but it was mixed with the desire to return home and resume my "normal" life. This was truly a once in a lifetime experience for me. It was wonderful to visit a strange far away corner of the world, to meet new people, and to finally experience the radio conditions on the "other" side of the pileups.

The travel and radio experiences were wonderful, but for me the most rewarding aspect of the trip was experiencing the wonderful fellowship among our team members. Being a part of this team was an honor and a pleasure I will remember for the rest of my days. From the very beginning of planning, KOIR kept saying "let's have some fun", and that's exactly what we did. We hope you had fun, too.



SouthWest Ohio DX Association (SWODXA)

DX Donation Policy

The mission of SWODXA is to support DXing and major DXpeditions by providing funding. A funding request from the organizers of a planned DXpedition should be directed to the DX committee by filling out an online funding request.
(<https://www.swodxa.org/dx-grant-application/>)

The DX Grant committee will determine how well the DXpedition plans meet key considerations (see below). If the DX Grant committee recommends supporting the DXpedition in question, a recommended funding amount is determined based on the criteria below. The chairman of the committee will make a recommendation at the general meeting on the donation.

Factors Affecting a DXpedition Funding Request Approval

DXpedition destination	Website with logos of club sponsors
Ranking on the ClubLog Most Wanted Survey	QSLs with logos of club sponsors
Online logs and pilot stations	Logistics and transportation costs
Number of operators and their credentials	Number of stations on the air
LoTW log submissions	Bands, modes and duration of operation

H40GC	H44GC	ZL9HR	XX9D	HK0NA	FT4TA
KH1/KH7Z	EP2A	FT5ZM	C21GC	VK9WA	NH8S
K4M	CY9C	VK9MA	PT0S	FT4JA	YJ0X
6060	VP6D	T04E	XR0ZR	VP8STI	SP8SGI
W1AW/KH8	K1N	3D2C	VK0EK	S21ZBB	E30FB
ST0RY	TI9/3Z9DX	VK9MT	K5P	9U4M	TX3X
VU7AB	3Y0Z	3C0L	TX7EU	CE0Z	3C1L
		3B7A	K9W		

SouthWest Ohio DX Association (SWODXA)

Club Fact Sheet

Who We Are: SWODXA is comprised of active DX'ers and testers with a deep passion for all aspects of Amateur Radio. We welcome everyone who is interested in joining our club to please contact us. SWODXA members are active in all facets of DX and Contesting. We also travel to, and fund various DXpeditions all over the world. SWODXA sponsors the annual DX Dinner held on the Friday evening of Hamvention weekend in Dayton, Ohio. In addition, SWODXA members moderate the Hamvention DX Forum. SWODXA is proud sponsor of the prestigious *DXpedition of the Year Award*.

DX Donation Policy: The policy supports major DXpeditions that meet our requirements for financial sponsorship. Details are available on the website at: <https://www.swodxa.org/dxgrant-application/> and elsewhere in this newsletter

Club History: The Southwest Ohio DX Association (SWODXA) is one of the country's premier amateur radio clubs. Though loosely formed in mid-1977, the club had its first formal organizational meeting in August of 1981 where Frank Schwob, W8OK (sk), was elected our first President. While organized primarily as a DX club, SWODXA members are active in all aspects of our hobby.

Requirements for Membership: We welcome all hams who have an interest in DXing. It doesn't matter whether you're a newcomer, or an old-timer to DXing; everyone is welcome! Visit <http://swodxa.org/member.htm>

Meetings: The club meets on the second Thursday of each month alternating locations between at Marions Piazza on Kingsridge Dr. in Dayton, OH or Marions Piazza in West Chester. (Check the website) Members gather early in the private room for dinner and then a short business agenda at 6:30 PM, followed by a program. If you enjoy a night out on the town with friends, you'll enjoy this get together. Meeting attendance is NOT a requirement for membership.

Club Officers: Four presiding officers and the past president (or past VP) make up the Board of Directors. The current roster of officers are: President Tom Inglin, NR8Z; Vice President Kevin Jones, W8KJ; Secretary Mindi Jones, KC8CKW, and Treasurer Mike Suhar, W8RKO.

Website: We maintain websites at www.swodxa.org and www.swodxaevents.org managed by Bill, AJ8B. These sites provide information about a variety of subjects related to the club and DXing.