

The LongPath

A North Alabama DX Club Publication

Special points of interest:

- March Program
- Short Skip
- 1000 Miles/Watt
- March DX Contests
- ARRL SSB DX Contest
- Membership Questionnaire

How to Join

- * Come to a club meeting;
- * or send in an application by mail (form on www.NADXC.org)
- * or call Jason Amos at (256)963-6833

I Woke Up during ARRL DX CW 2007

By Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

ARRL DX CW was an eye-opening contest for me, a newcomer to contesting, and to the discipline it requires of those who would do well. Contests may remain for me a convenient way to snatch DX I need, as I'm sure it is for many. In that way, contests conjure up scenes from National Geographic of the wildebeest herd crossing a river full of alligators. I'm one of the alligators. I don't need all the wildebeest, but there are one or two especially tasty ones in every herd.

Previous contests began with turning on the radio to whatever band I was last on, probably the night before. If I intend to work the contest, and there's contest activity on that band, good—I start right there. Up and down the band a few times, the low-lying fruit is picked and logged, eventually thinning out. If there's a pileup, I wait until the next pass, hoping for it to subside. Eventually, I run out of stations to work, or patience, and move on to another band.

This contest was more organized, recognizing Principle #1: since band conditions change during the day, make appropriate use of conditions. For a pre-spring-equinox contest starting at 0000 UTC, this translates into beginning on 20m and moving down to 40m as the MUF threatens to close in.

I could possibly stay on 40m until the wee hours — the MUF might move below 40m, but it might not. Regardless, Principle #2 comes into play: when working search and pounce in a DX contest, go to where the DX is. (Profound, isn't it!) During winter of a low sunspot, low geomagnetic activity period, this means head for the low bands, and "make hay while the sun doesn't shine". Noisy old summer will be here soon enough to afflict 80m and 160m, and I need many countries on both bands. Indeed, considering my one antenna for 80m and 160m and the time I put in, these bands were very fruitful.

Even with these two principles firmly implanted in my noggin, achieving my goals for this contest and snatching an occasional wildebeest still seemed problematic, until my eyes became fixed on the little, automatically-updating N1MM gray line display. I was not logging with N1MM, but no matter: should your preference in logging programs lead you elsewhere, the display operates entirely independently. Hearing signals rise out of noisy nothingness to become perfectly workable log entries as the terminator crossed their QTH revealed Principle #3: gray line enhancement is not an old wives' tale. New band-countries started rolling in on 80m. I ran out of fingers on my multiplier hand, and ended the

See "I Woke Up..." on p. 7

DX Spots and the News

Program by Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

A look at DX spots in the news over the past several years. The rationale for which entities are included in the presentation is somewhat sketchy, so if you have a favorite you're worried might be omitted, your fears are well-based: bring your own info to share with us. Our business meeting begins at 7:00 pm, the program by 7:30, but get there around 6:15 for dinner.



The LongPath Staff

Interim Publisher/Editor:

Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

Departments:

Tom Homsley, N4WBS, Short Skip

Chuck Lewis, N4NM, DX Contests

Key Contributors:

Steve Werner, AG4W

Tom Russell, N4KG

Photographer/Consultant:

Jared Cassidy, KQ4VT

Table of Contents

I Woke Up during ARRL DX CW 2007	1
March Program	1
February Meeting Minutes	2
Alabama QSO Party Plaque Update	2
Short Skip	3
Future Generals flock to HARC Classes	3
1000 Miles per Watt	4
March DX Contests	5
ARRL SSB DX Contest 2007	6
Miscellanea	6
NADXC Membership Questionnaire	8

Call to order at 19:10 local

Treasures report \$3562.56 on Deposit

Minutes of the January meeting in Long-Path, were approved. We welcomed our guest Byron N4AX. We discussed the DX that had been worked the previous month with a great story by Tom Russell about VU7.

Announcements:

AL QSO Party in June before Field Day, good chance to practice and warm up before Field Day

There was much discussion about VU7LD and why we were not able to send money, but that we had allocated money for DX. Butch suggested we support the BS7H with \$150.00 and Nancy seconded. There was discussion about whether we should support a DXpedition to these rocks (Scarborough Reef), and the motion passed 12 - 1.

No Old Business.

New Business:

Budget: comments: John Winter commented on Budget shows good stewardship. Decline in membership lowers the over all income. A reduction in expenses based on actuals from before. The Banquet maybe different as a result of the ARRL National Convention

Chuck N4NM motioned to accept the proposed budget John KR4F seconded.

Tom D. asked about the survey questions and if everyone was ok with filling out the question. Asked that if you had additional ones to send please let him know. The only question that was discussed at length was the one about age. There will be no personal data posted about any member, only a demographic of how many members

are in what age group.

Discussion of moving our meeting location as a result of the mishap in Jan. ensued. Most people present were still pretty happy with Ryan's that we have had very few issues and the meal was reasonable and had variety.

Melanie Winter motioned to support a plaque for the AL QSO Party. Bill Grimwood seconded. The QSO party is offering for winners of categories to get plaques instead of just a certificate. The certificate will be given out if no one sponsors a category. The discussion was that if we sponsor one of these that it would be good for name recognition.

After some discussion the original motion was amended to support the in state QRP award.

The vote was: 9 yes, 1 no, and 8 abstained. This yielded a non majority vote to pass and was considered as a rejection. It was not clear at this time if the bylaws specified a majority vote was required or if a majority of those voting could carry the motion. *[More below—Ed.]*

We Adjourned at 19:50 local.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Amos, Secretary

AL QSO Party Update

By the LongPath Staff

A new business topic at the February meeting was solicitation of award plaque sponsors for the Alabama QSO party by organizer Jim Johnson, KC4HW, as reported above.

Since our February meeting, the Alabama QSO Party has received pledges of sponsorship for the remaining award categories, removing the need for our further consideration of the matter.

Application Avalanche

The avalanche of Amateur Radio license and license upgrade applications prompted by the FCC's elimination of Morse code as a licensing requirement is well under way with no end in sight. ARRL VEC Manager Maria Somma, AB1FM, reports that paperwork from upward of 450 Amateur Radio exam sessions held since the new rules went into effect February 23 has arrived so far this week. The ARRL VEC, which typically receives paperwork from about 70 sessions each day, has had to add personnel and schedule extended hours to keep up with the workload. This was posted on Wednesday February 28 at <http://www.arrl.org/>. Also on the ARRL front page is info on the DX dinner at Dayton, most wanted list by the German DX Foundation and upcoming DXpedition to Spratley Island.

Upgrade Now

The Birmingham Hamfest is May 5 - 6 if you can't wait until the Huntsville Hamfest to upgrade. Location and info at <http://www.w4cue.com/fest.html>

March Contests

Information concerning coming events is provided in the March issue of QST and on the ARRL web site at <http://www.arrl.org/contests/months/mar.html>

Need a New Rig?

Check out the <http://www.sherweng.com/table.html> web site for comparative measurements on many popular rigs. There are also email reflectors covering various ham brands, e.g. <http://mailman.qth.net/> has a "1000mp" list where discussions lately have centered around comparing various members of the FT1000 series with the new FT 2000.

Need to Operate Remote?

If you travel a lot on business or are constrained by CC&Rs, you can kick-start your hobby just in time for the new sun-spot cycle with one of the new digital rigs such as the FlexRadio SDR1000 and the new Ten-Tec [OMNI VII HF+6m Transceiver](#)

SDR

Interested in the state-of-the-art in ham radio experimentation? Remember the sweet smell of solder-smoke and the burns in the carpet? Check out the latest presentation on software-defined radio (SDR) given by Lyle KK7P at the MicroHAMS Digital Conference 2007 at <http://www.microhams.com/softcontent.aspx?scId=45>. Click on ppt to get the PowerPoint presentation; the movie is very slow to download. Lyle is currently involved in the High Performance SDR (HPSDR) project <http://hpsdr.org/>. For those interested in rolling their own SDR, TAPR is selling the HPSDR component boards - bare boards as well as complete and tested boards. Of course you can buy SDRs ready-made, e.g. the SDR1000 and the Ten-Tec Orion II

Incoming QSL Bureaus

If you haven't sent envelopes and

stamps to the W4 incoming QSL bureau lately, info is available at <http://www.cdxa.org/w4qsl.html>. Other areas and info on how to do it can be found at <http://www.arrl.org/qsl/qslin.html>

Dayton Hamvention

Thinking of going to Dayton in May? The 56th Dayton show will run May 18, 19 & 20 at Hara Arena. Forums are taking shape; for example, check out Room 1 on Saturday. Beginning at 8:15 with "Open Source Software Defined Radios - the new wave in radio communications" by K5SDR followed by con-testing at 11:30 and DXing at 2:15. Get the latest info at <http://www.hamvention.org/>

Also at Dayton

QRP ARCI is sponsoring Four Days in May (FDIM) Thursday May 17th through Sunday May 20th with speakers including Lyle KK7P and Wes W7ZOI of EMRFD fame. See their web site at <http://www.qrparci.org/>

So long 'til next time

*"In days of old, when ops were bold,
and sidebands not invented,*

*The word would pass, by pounding
brass, and all were well contented."*

73 es gud dx . . . de N4WBS

Future Generals Flock to HARC Classes

By the LongPath Staff

Each Friday, at 6:30 pm before the weekly HARC meeting, classes are being held to upgrade existing Technician licensees to General, and introduce them to the world of HF. HARC vice president Rolf Goedhart, K4RGG, proposed these classes, the first sponsored by HARC in three years, beginning

March 2nd. Cards sent to Tech licensees in the area resulted in a turnout of 34 students for the inaugural lesson.

Instructors are Leigh Bartlow, WD4CPF, Tom Hatter, K4AKC, Woody Zeigler, K8GNM, and Tom Duncan, KG4CUY.

1000 Miles per Watt

By Steve Werner, AG4W

It is amazing how much fun you can have without sunspots. During the weekend on Feb 10th I picked up a number of new band countries. On CW on 40 meters I worked J2ORR. On 15meter SSB I worked YW0DX. Also got them on 30 CW, 80 SSB and 15 meter RTTY. That same weekend I also worked 4L8A on 20 meter RTTY and 3B9/G3TXF on 30 CW.

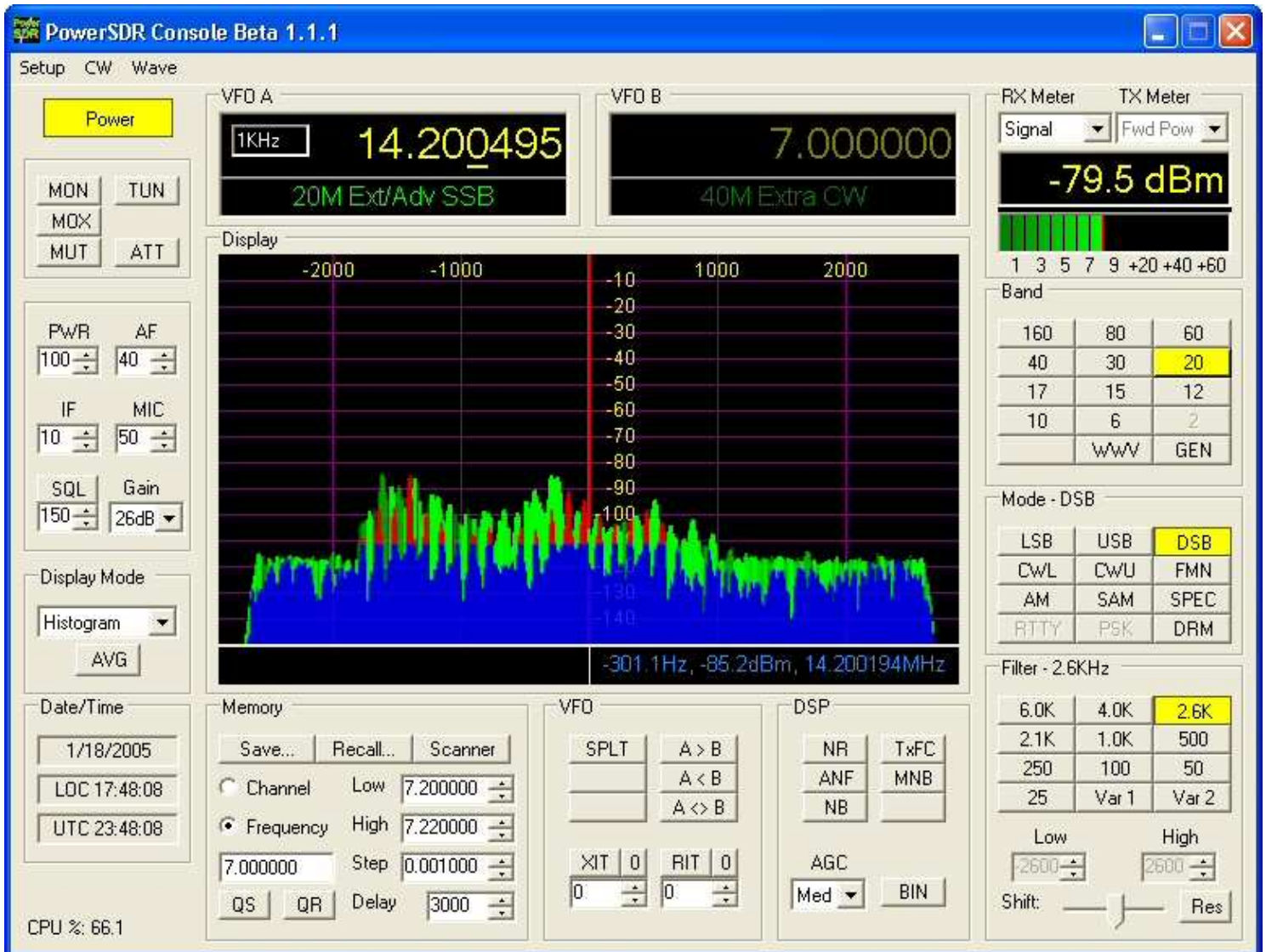
The following weekend was just as much fun. During the ARRL CW DX contest I worked VP8/LZ1UQ on 40 and 20 meters and 5T5DY on 40 meters. On 80 meters I worked RL3A, LY80, EA6BF, LY2IJ, RA3ZZ, ES5RR, YL2SM, YL7X, and LN8W. I also worked 5Z4/9A3A on 20 meters.

I then hooked up my Firefly SDR homebrew rig and with 3 watts on 20 meters and worked VP9/W6PH, HP1XX, PJ2T, PJ4/KU8E and KH7X. KH7X was important because it exceeded the 1000 mile per watt that many QRPers try to achieve. This was done on Sunday afternoon using the Power SDR software. Included is a view of one of the many ways that software can be configured. The great part about using 3 watts with a wire antenna is that no one will complain about interference with TVs, stereos, telephones, etc. The high power QSOs on 80 meter CW were actually more difficult to make due to the noise and signal levels. I did get some

clear labels to put on the homebrew Firefly rig. That makes it a little easier to use.

I hope the rest of the club enjoyed those 2 weekends as much as I did.

Steve AG4W



March DX Contests

By Chuck Lewis, N4NM

ARRL International DX Contest (SSB), 80-10 meters

Mar. 3, 0000Z to Mar. 4, 2400Z
Exchange: RST plus State or Province;
DX sends RST plus power input
See page 99, Dec. QST or
www.arrl.org/contests

RSGB Commonwealth Contest, (CW), 80 - 10 meters

Mar 10, 1000Z to Mar. 11, 1000Z
Exchange: RST plus serial #.
See page 90, Mar. QST or
www.rsgbhfcc.org

Russian DX Contest (CW/SSB), 160 - 10 Meters

Mar 17, 1200Z to Mar 18, 1200Z
Exchange: RS(T) plus serial # or
Oblast
See page 90, Mar. QST or
www.rdx.org

BARTG Spring RTTY Contest, (RTTY), 80 - 10 Meters

Mar 17, 0200Z to Mar 19, 0200Z
Exchange: 3 digit S.N. plus 4 digit
time.
See page 91, Mar. QST or
www.bartg.demon.co.uk

CQWW WPX Contest (SSB), 160 - 10 meters

Mar 24, 0000Z to Mar 25, 2400Z
Exchange: RS plus Serial #.
See page 91, Mar. QST or
www.cqwp.com

OTHERS:

DARC 10-Meter (Digital) Contest 1100Z- 1700Z, Mar 4

Open Ukraine (RTTY) Championship

2200Z-2359Z, Mar 3 (160/80M) and
0000Z-0159Z, Mar 4 (160/80M) and

0800Z-1159Z, Mar 4 (40-10M)

RSGB 80m Club Championship, Data (Mar) 2000Z-2130Z, Mar 5

AGCW QRP Contest

1400Z-2000Z, Mar 10

EA PSK31 Contest 1600Z

Mar 10 to 1600Z, Mar 11

UBA Spring Contest, (CW)

0700Z-1100Z, Mar 11

RSGB 80m Club Championship, (CW) CW (Mar)

2000Z-2130Z, Mar 14

9K 15-Meter Contest,

1200Z-1600Z, Mar 18

RSGB 80m Club Championship, (SSB)

2000Z-2130Z, Mar 22

RSGB 80m Club Championship, (CW)

(Apr) 2000Z-2130Z, Apr 2

SP DX Contest

1500Z, Apr 2 to 1500Z, Apr 8

EA (RTTY) Contest

1600Z, Apr 2 to 1600Z, Apr 8

UBA Spring Contest, (SSB)

0600Z-1000Z, Apr 8

EU Spring Sprint, (SSB)

1500Z-1859Z, Apr 14



Dates & times often change or are mis-
printed in the journals; beware.

Chuck, N4NM

NADXC Officers

President: **Tom Duncan**, KG4CUY
duncant1@ds-s.com or 256-539-7544

Vice President: **Tom Russell**, N4KG
n4kg@aol.com or 256-231-1402

Secretary/Treasurer: **Jason Amos**, KD4BJW
kd4bjw@arrl.net or 256-963-6833

Director: **Mike Maples**, K4ADK
mmaples9@comcast.net or 256-534-6563

Director: **Vic Holland**, K4RVH
k4rvh@arrl.net or 256-721-9106

ARRL SSB DX Contest 2007 - N4KG
SOAB LP (Icom 746 PRO 100 W.)

This contest reminded me of the old Clint Eastwood Movie, "The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly"

THE GOOD:

The Low Bands were GREAT from well before sunset to after sunrise. Even with Low Power I was able to work most of what I heard except for the (weak) Europeans on 160M. The "Have Radio, Will Travel" guys were EVERYWHERE providing me with many Multi-Band contacts.

6 Bands: 6Y1V 8P1A FY5KE VP5H (E-layer opening to VP5 and 6Y)

5 Bands: HD2A(-160) HI3C (10) HI3T (10) LU4DX(160) P40A (10) PJ2T (10) PJ4G (10) TI5N (80) T05A (10) V26H (10) V47KP (10) VP2E (10) WP2Z (10)

4 Bands: 9A7A C6ANM CE4CT CN3A CU2A DL0WW EA7RU EC2DX EI7M HG1S HG6N HR2DMR IR4X KH7X LP1H OE4A OK5R P40LE PT7CB PX2A TM6M TO6T VP9/W6PH XE7S

THE BAD:

From many parts of the World (and USA), 10 Meters was a BUST and 15

Meters was characterized by short openings to limited areas of the world. The guys from Wisconsin must have taken their "Black Hole" with them to PJ2T as I NEVER could hear them on 10M, even when coordinating with the 15M station. This was in spite of working 5 YV's, FY, HK, HP, TI, and 8P1. PJ2T reported only 236 stations (all but 2 on Sunday) on 10M, mostly in W5 or west.

Even when 15 (and 10) Meters were open, activity was clearly lacking, with few stations heard above 21350. SC3A (SM) was the only station worked on 15M from Scandinavia with NO stations worked from CQ Zones 16 and 20.

This left 20 Meters as the MONEY BAND for most of the World and it was Wall to Wall. That's just NOT FUN, especially when you live 1 skip zone away from the upper East Coast!

THE UGLY:

PACKET PILEUPS get my vote for first place in the UGLY category. As a Low Power entrant, BIG pileups were a slugfest that was best dealt with by carefully TIMING my calls just right or loading a Memory Position and coming back later.

Besides the size of the pileup, an-

other Key Indicator of Packet Pileups was a steady flow of New Callers who obviously knew the DX station's Callsign in spite of the fact that he had not identified in the last X minutes.

I decided that if there was NO ID after 3 Q's that I would just start calling. When answered, I would ASK for the DX Callsign BEFORE giving my report. If it was a DUPE, I informed the DX station that he could save BOTH of us some time by Identifying More Frequently! Sadly, Contesting is becoming more of a Computer Game than a Radio Sport!

Yet another UGLY aspect of BIG (Packet) Pileups is people who STEAL other peoples contacts, either by simply overriding them or ignoring the partial calls given by the DX even when their call is nothing like what the DX station was calling. I heard this way too many times this weekend.

ALL of the above is why I find myself questioning why I work Phone Contests. I ended up taking more breaks than usual just to get away from the MADNESS, reducing my activity to 28 hours vs. my usual 32 to 36 hours. I find myself questioning how serious I will be about entering future Phone Contests.

Tom N4KG in North Alabama (70 miles East of W5 - Mississippi)

Miscellanea

by the LongPath Staff

Five **Themis** satellites were launched on Saturday, February 17th from Cape Canaveral on a mission to continuously map Earth's magnetosphere, and in particular, to concentrate on gaining an understanding of geomagnetic storms in our atmosphere. If all goes well, this mission may give us insight into propagation through the auroral zone.

Kudos to **Steve Werner, AG4W**, chief operating officer of Summa Technology Inc. when he's not DXing. Steve's company was profiled in the March 4th Huntsville Times. Away from his day job, Steve writes articles like those in this month's and last month's Long-Path describing his Firefly software-defined radio. Check these out these

articles: you can build one too!

Look forward to working **Thailand on the low bands**. HS operators received renewed permission for 2007 to use certain frequencies in the 80m and 160m bands, during contests only, phone and CW. So far there is no indication whether this includes only certain contests, or all contests.

I Woke Up during ARRL DX CW 2007

(continued from p. 1)

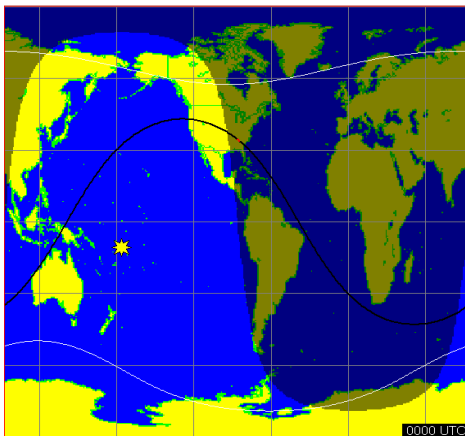
contest with six hands worth on 80m.

All this education over the space of one contest left me fairly bursting with insight into the cosmic underpinnings of our hobby, so that I felt obliged to record my observations for posterity, or at least to review before the next similar contest. Not wishing to embarrass myself, I used N4KG's rate sheet, good for a factor of four or five over mine. From

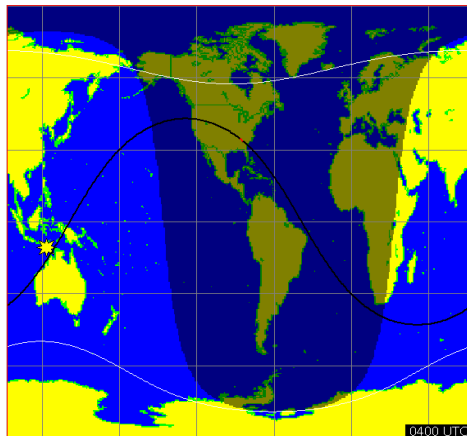
this, rate graphs for the two contest days were compiled, color coded by band, UTC along the horizontal axis, and numbers of contacts along the vertical. Of special help to me are the six plots produced at 4 hour intervals by W6EL-prop. The connection between these and diurnal rate variations has been very helpful.

Seasoned DXers and contesters will be chuckling "here's someone who's finally waking up", and indeed, that's the case. Perhaps these minor epiphanies will benefit another newcomer with insight into the marvels of propagation, and the joys of DXing.

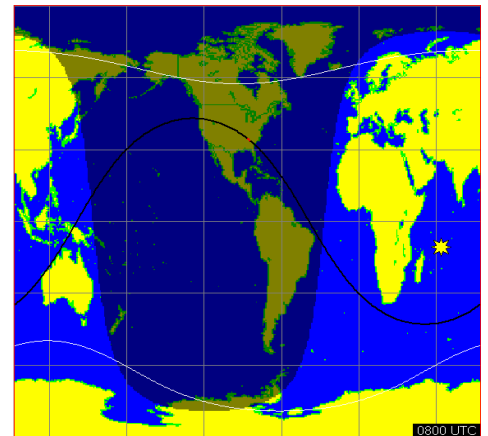
73, Tom Duncan, KG4CUY



0000 UTC



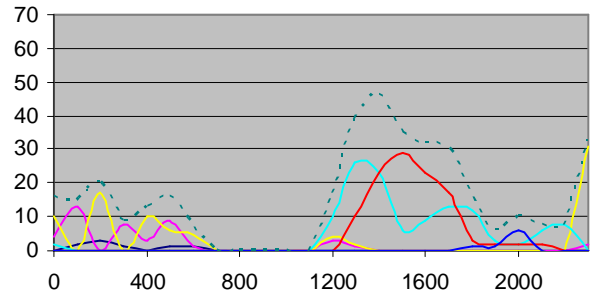
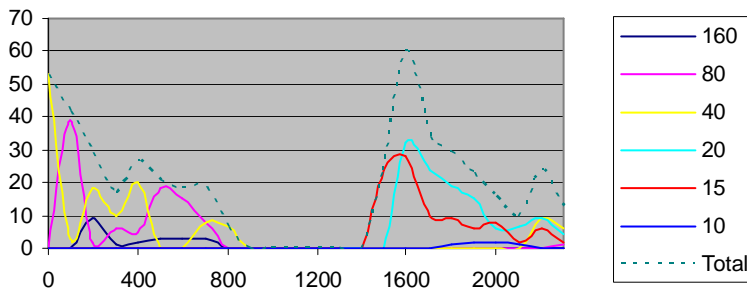
0400 UTC



0800 UTC

Day 1

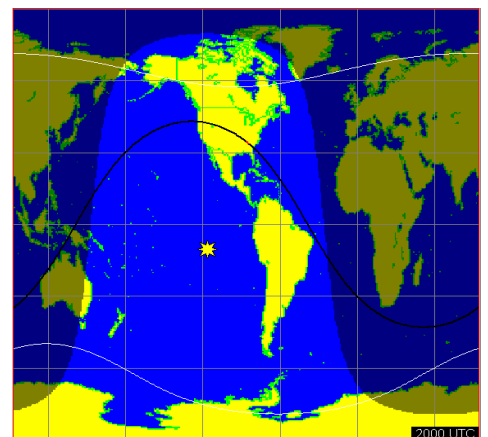
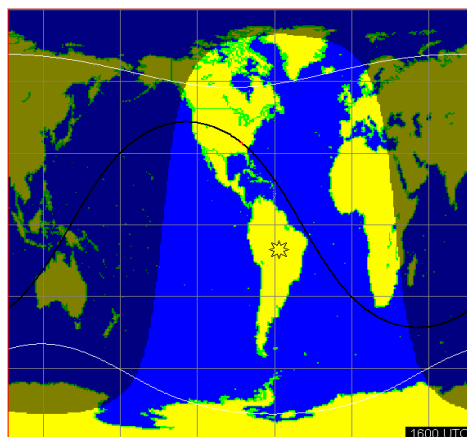
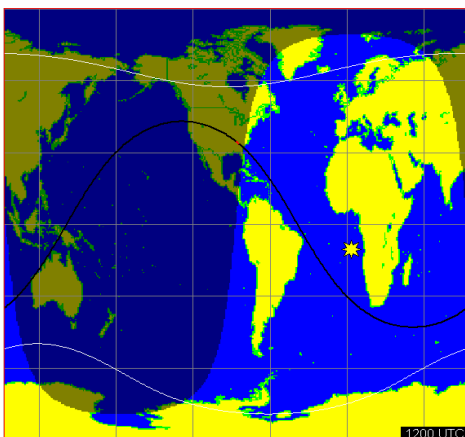
Day 2



1200 UTC

1600 UTC

2000 UTC



NADXC Membership Questionnaire

As promised in the February LongPath, here is the NADXC Membership Questionnaire. The information collected will be used to influence the direction of the club. Responses to this questionnaire will be used only in aggregate: nothing will be attributed to individuals. Please return the questionnaire by any suitable means to NADXC Secretary Jason Amos, KD4BJW.

A. Membership Profile

1. What class of license do you hold? _____
2. How many years have you been licensed? _____
3. Your age? _____
4. How many years have you been a NADXC member? _____
5. How many NADXC meetings did you attend in the past year? _____
6. Are you a HARC member? Yes No
7. Do you belong to any other ham radio clubs? Yes No

B. Member Operating Capabilities, Preferences, and Activities

1. Have you ever entered a DX contest? Yes No
2. Do you regularly participate in DX contests? Yes No
3. On what bands are you now able to operate? 160 80 60 40 30 20 17 15 12 10 6 2
4. On what modes are you now operating? CW SSB RTTY PSK SSTV _____
5. Do you have and/or operate a mobile rig? Yes No
6. Do you have a VHF or UHF HT? VHF UHF None
7. Are you interest in QRP operation? Yes No
8. Do you now own a QRP HF transceiver? Yes No Model: _____
9. What DX operating awards to you now hold? _____
10. Have you ever participated in a DXpedition? Yes No

C. Meetings and other club activities

1. Have you ever presented a program at a NADXC meeting?
2. Would you be interested in presenting a program at a future NADXC meeting? Yes No
3. In general, how interesting have you found the NADXC meeting programs you have heard in the past 12-24 months? _____
4. What day of the week would be the LEAST convenient for NADXC meetings? Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat
5. What day of the week would be the MOST convenient for NADXC meetings? Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat
6. Do you normally come early to have dinner with other members before the meetings? Yes No
7. Is the combination dinner/meeting arrangement important to you? Yes No

NADXC Membership Questionnaire

(continued from p. 8)

8. Circle the following program topics which would be of interest to you:

- Antennas
- Towers
- Packet Cluster
- Internet resources
- Contesting
- Station Design
- RFI
- Satellite work
- DXpeditions
- Equipment Reviews
- QSL routes
- DXCC history
- Propagation
- Power line noise
- Logging software
- QRP operation
- FCC issues
- ARRL Organization
- DXing tricks and tips
- PSK-31
- RF exposure
- Beacons
- Software-defined radios
- Principles of electronics
- PRB-1
- ULS/CORES
- Transmitter technology
- Solar Power
- Kit Building
- Receiver technology

D. NADXC Web Site

1. How often do you view the NADXC web site? _____
2. What web site information do you find most useful? _____
3. What web site information do you find least useful? _____
4. What changes to the web site would make it more useful to you? _____

E. LongPath Newsletter

1. How would you rate the length and content of the LongPath? _____
2. What changes in length/content would make the LongPath more interesting to you? _____
3. Do you usually print a copy of the LongPath for future reference? Yes No

Make Room for More!

March is a five-Friday month, which means HARC is having an auction at the Red Cross at 7:30, March 30th. NADXC members are welcome to share in the booty at cents on the dollar. You can sell your old stuff (at the same rates), or take advantage of LongPath ads aimed at the discerning audience. Just contact Tom at

duncant1@ds-s.com or 705-2147 (w)

We'll help you fetch top dollar for that box of dented 6L6s.