



The LongPath

A North Alabama DX Club Publication

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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

Good Days

By Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

I was sifting through a weekend's worth of emails when I came upon the previous Friday's April 28th Propagation Forecast from the ARRL. The gist of it was "solar flux will be around 100, and geomagnetic conditions quiet until May 2". From my viewpoint, the forecast should have been "conditions will be great on 40 through 15 meters, everyone will be there, so don't miss the activity on April 30th UTC".

It was the weekend of the Helvetia Contest, which had several years ago delivered my first set of HB9 QSOs. It seemed to me there were a lot of European stations out there, not just working HB9s, but everyone else. They had good signals, and were easy to work—a couple were even interested in more than "599 TU". Wait now, not just Europeans, but UA9s. There's JT1C0, whom I had first worked only weeks before. Terrific activity on 20m!

Switching after a while to 30m, I found the throngs gathered again. Here was S9SS, and all the countries heard on 20m. All the activity had crowded VQ9 up to 10122. Good signals, too — many could be worked with 100 watts to cloud burner dipoles.

Moving down to 40m, there was even more activity. A few contests were running (including the Alabama QSO Party), but most activity was just stations working stations for the best reason of all—because they were there. Good conditions and lots of activity what could be better?

This continued until I went to bed Saturday night, and it was there again Sunday, now including 17m. We're supposed to be concentrating on the low bands, or just pining for the good old days "when 10m was open all night", but amazing things like this can and do happen. My own take included new countries Chagos, Malaysia, and Turkey, and new bands for TF, S9, JT at least—I think I'm missing some. Plus a log full of the kind of diverse DX activity which I've experienced before only during contests—but on WARC bands too!

As I write this, there are reports of strong 20m signals from all over Asia—Hong Kong, Taiwan, Brunei, Thailand, Korea... Aren't the intricacies of propagation amazing? Thankfully there are hams (indigenous or otherwise) at these locations with which to QSO.

What a great time to be on the air!

73, Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

High-Frequency Terrain Analysis

Program by Jerry Montgomery, K4SAV

Would you like to know how your local terrain affects your signal? Now a program is available that will answer this question, and it is easy to use. Join us for the next NADXC meeting, and hear Jerry talk about HFTA, High Frequency Terrain Analysis.

The business meeting beings at 7:00, the program around 7:30. See you around 6:15 for dinner.



Looking for some Low Cost Tower Sections?

Rohn 25 is currently selling for \$110 a section for straight sections and Rohn 20 is selling for \$100 per section (most of the cost is in labor and galvanizing which is the same for both). Top sections range from \$110 to \$135 depending on type.

N4KG is having an Inventory Reduction Sale on used tower.

- 70 ft of Rohn 25 with flat base and top sections for \$150. Sections have various degrees of SURFACE rust but are believed to be mechanically sound. Treatment at a regalvanizing facility would restore the sections to like-new condition for a fraction of new tower cost.
- 80 ft of TV tower with large horizontal bracing / steps, recently dismantled, after supporting 3 tribanders at 40, 60, and 80 ft for \$100. Sections have moderate to heavy SURFACE rust but are still clean inside and could be restored to like-new condition by regalvanizing.
- Light weight light duty tower, 6 inch face width with solid legs 1/2 inch in diameter for \$10 per 10 foot section (9 sections available, maybe more)

U.S. Tower MA-40

This is a Tubular Crank Up tower that nestles at 21.5 ft and can be cranked up to 40 ft. It is rated at 6.8 square feet of windload in a 70 mph wind which should be adequate for most small Triband Beams. NO GUYS required IF properly bracketed to a rigid structure near the top of the base section.

Details can be seen at <http://www.ustower.com/ma-40.html>

Asking \$800 in good used condition. Retail for \$1330 plus shipping.

For further information on any of the above,

Contact Tom Russell
N4KG@AOL.com
256-233-1402

The LongPath Staff

Interim Publisher/Editor:

Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

Departments:

Myron Manker, W4UR, Short Skip

Chuck Lewis, N4NM, DX Contests

Key Contributors:

Jason Amos, KD4BJW

Tom Russell, N4KG

Photographer/Consultant:

Jared Cassidy, KQ4VT

LongPath Ads

like these may be placed by one and all. If you have stuff to sell or trade, or want to buy something, list it in the LongPath. Satisfaction is guaranteed, or your money back. Contact Tom at

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

No 3YØX QSL Cards Mailed Yet

A recent check of the Peter One website indicates that no 3YØX QSL cards have yet been mailed out. As of April 30, the N200 QSL team says it has sorted all the incoming cards and is in the process of comparing cards with the DXpedition's log before printing labels. They then plan to bulk mail cards in stages, so I guess we'll have to be patient for a while longer. If you'd like to keep abreast of the status of the QSL processing efforts, check the Peter One website (www.peterone.com) which is still being updated regularly.

The Current Solar Cycle Bottom - Are We There Yet?

There is beginning to be some speculation that we may be at or near the bottom of the current solar cycle. That's good! However, there is also some speculation that the "bottom" of the current cycle will last longer than usual before cycle 24 solar activity begins to increase. That's bad! Since nobody really knows for sure, we'll just have to be patient and deal with conditions as they exist. There are always DX opportunities around, but for a while yet we may still have to work a little harder to find them. There are two ways to

look at this. The optimists say propagation will probably get no worse than it is now, and things should begin to improve before we know it. The pessimists, citing somebody's axiom that "it always seems darkest just before it goes pitch black," continue to complain. Personally, I'm in the optimists' camp.

ARRL EXPO Returns to Dayton

As it did last year, the ARRL will host its "EXPO" exhibit during the Dayton Hamvention. This large exhibit area will include a vast amount of information regarding the League's resources, plus other helpful material. If you're going to the Hamvention, make sure you visit the EXPO area. There is some good stuff there.

Speaking of the Hamvention!

Those of us who will be making the annual pilgrimage to Dayton this month will be keeping an eye out for any new product introductions or announcements. If we see anything that looks interesting, we'll tell you about it in the June LongPath.

Is Your FCC Address Correct?

In his "HOW'S DX" column in the May issue of QST, Bernie McClenny mentioned something that is good advice for all of us. FCC rules require that all licensed amateurs keep their current mailing addresses on file with the Commission. To file an address update, you'll need to use FCC Form 605. The ARRL has some helpful information on its website on how to complete the form. Check it out at www.arrl.org/fcc/uls-ga.html.

CQ WW WPX CW Contest

Don't forget the CQ WW WPX CW contest on May 27-28. This is one of the "biggies," so why not take advantage of it to pick up some new DXCC entities. Let's hope the propagation gods smile on us that weekend.

73 es gud dx . . . de W4UR

Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, has an article in May 2006 World Radio every active ham should read. To summarize, he contends ham radio will be forced to "go digital" in order to retain its claim as a useful emergency communications medium. Furthermore, he says the time for this transition is "...not decades away any longer. It's only months or a year or three." The article goes into considerably more detail, and he promises further expansion in future articles.

(Pasternak does not address this), might we be forced to "go digital" if not by law, then as a defense against wide-band QRM? If we do, will the lure of pulling out that marginal QSO still be there to entice the DXer? After all, RTTY is already a common-enough DX mode, so haven't we already learned how to have DX fun in the digital world?

This is murky territory with more questions than answers, but each of us should consider what ham radio would mean to us in a totally digital future.

Whether we agree with WA6ITF's rea-

If hams retain HF privileges

ARI International DX Contest, (CW & SSB), 160-10M

May 6, 2000Z to May 7, 1959Z
Exchange: RS(T) plus Serial # or I Province
See page 99, May QST

Alessandro Volta RTTY DX Contest, (RTTY), 80-10 M

May 13, 1200Z to May 14, 1200Z
Exchange: RST, Ser. No., CQ Zone
See www.contestvolta.com

CQ-M Intl. DX Contest (CW & SSB), 160-10M

May. 13, 1200Z to May. 14, 1200Z
Exchange: RS(T) plus Serial #
See page 99, May QST

Baltic Contest (CW & SSB), (80/75M only)

May 20, 2100Z to May 21, 0200Z
Exchange: RS(T) plus Serial #
See page 100, May QST

EU PSK DX Contest, (PSK), 80-10M

May 20, 1200Z to May 21, 1200Z
Exchange: RST & Serial # or EU area code

See page 100, May QST or www.srars.org

His Majesty King of Spain Contest, (CW), 160 - 10M

May 20, 1800Z to May 21, 1800Z
Exchange: RS(T) plus Serial # or EA Province
See page 100, May QST

CQ WPX CW Contest (CW), 80-10M

May. 27, 0000Z to May 28, 2359Z
Exchange: RST plus serial #
See page 98, Mar. QST or www.cqwp.com

OTHERS:

RSGB 80m Club Championship, (DATA), 1900Z-2030Z, May 10

VK/Trans-Tasman 80m Contest, Phone 0800Z-1400Z, May 13

RSGB 80m Club Championship, (CW), 2000Z-2130Z, May 18

Portuguese Navy Day Contest, PSK31 1500Z-2100Z, May 20

Portuguese Navy Day Contest, CW/SSB 1500Z, May 20 to 1500Z, May 21

VK/Trans-Tasman 80m Contest, CW 0800Z-1400Z, May 27

ARCI Hootowl Sprint

2000 local - 2400 local, May 28

IARU Region 1 Field Day, CW

1500Z, Jun 3 to 1459Z, Jun 4

RSGB National Field Day

1500Z, Jun 3 to 1500Z, Jun 4

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

ANARTS WW RTTY Contest

0000Z, Jun 10 to 2400Z, Jun 11

Asia-Pacific Sprint, SSB

1100Z-1300Z, Jun 10

GACW WWSA CW DX Contest

1500Z, Jun 10 to 1500Z, Jun 11

Dates & times often change or are misprinted in the journals; beware.

Chuck, N4NM

Miscellanea

April 2006 Meeting Minutes

...will be available for review and comment at the Tuesday, May 9th meeting.

Web Site Changes

Email addresses on the NADXC membership roster appearing on www.nadxc.org have been changed to denote "@" by "(at)". Hopefully this will

reduce the probability of robots reaping email addresses and spamming NADXC members as a result. Thanks Jerry, K4SAV, for this tip.

Field Day Reminder

Field Day will be held at the Space and Rocket Center—see last month's LongPath for a map. A few of us will meet at the QTH of Frank Emens, W4HFU, around 11:00 am on Friday,

June 24th to load tower sections on Bill Grimwood's trailer to haul to the site. We will begin setting up at 1:00 pm. Help is needed erecting towers from 1:00 pm to dark. Volunteers please contact Field Day coordinator Kevin Bardon, KG4RCP, at bardonk@uah.edu to make your availability known.

DX "Springs to Life"

By Thomas Russell, N4KG

April treated us to some delightful DX openings and opportunities from both the propagation perspective and DXpedition perspective.

Western Sahara was activated by a small international group for several days as S01R beginning April 11. N4KG was pleased to contact S01R on 80, 40, 30, 20, 15M CW and 160, 80, 40, 20, 15M SSB.

Amateurs from around the world flocked to the Andaman Island (VU4) DX Convention following the offer of operating privileges to anyone who held a valid Indian License. The post-equinox timing ensured sufficient mutual daylight for MUF's from W4 to VU4 to rise above 14 MHz for several hours each day. Operators signing VU4AN / VU3xxx were heard in Alabama morning and evening on 20 and 17 Meter CW and SSB and even briefly on 15M CW for 30 minutes between 1500 and 1600 GMT on April 20 and 21. The strongest signal heard was during the brief 15M opening.

VU4AN/ QSO's on 17 and 15 Meters represented All Time New Band Countries for N4KG, leaving only Scarborough Reef (BS7H) as the last needed country on 15 Meters. K8EJ in NE Tennessee managed to snag one of the VU4AN stations on 30 Meters, just before his sunset, early in the operation.

April 20th also brought the appearance of a Venezuelan DXpedition to Aves Island (YVO) signing YXOA but quickly changing to YXOLIX after the death of one of their team members, YV5LIX, from either a heart attack or stroke while on the island. Several stations were operating simultaneously covering all 9 Bands on CW and 8 Bands on SSB. YXOLIX was the 70th 9 Band Country with the same callsign for N4KG.

April 30th brought about a DX "Trifecta" that lasted 4 days with a boost in MUF as some old cycle sunspots came into position, coordinated with low geomagnetic activity, and increased daylight between North America and Asia.

Signals on 20 Meters from SE Asia and the South China Sea region were unusually strong from April 30 through May 3 in the early morning hours, primarily from 1200 to 1400 GMT, with lower signal strengths being noted before and after that 'window' of opportunity. Early risers were blessed not only with strong signals, but considerable activity from BV, BY (6 stns), DU, HL (6), JD, JT, P2, V8 (2), VR2 (3), XV (2), and 9V(2),

The evening opening to Central and Western Asia also benefited from the higher MUF and stable conditions. Stations from Russia (UA3,4,9,0) and the former USSR republics were quite strong and easily worked with Low Power or even QRP. Activity was also noted from A4, A6, A9, and several stations from the 'other' Georgia, 4L (ex UF6). These openings lasted until almost midnight local time (past 0400Z).

It was especially interesting to note the Strong Signals on 17 Meters from VR2XMT at 1300Z, YBOJIV at 1350Z, 4K8M at 1413Z, 9M2CNC at 1545Z, 9M6/G300K at 1830Z, 9V1VV at 1621Z, and 9V1RH at 1710Z. These morning openings are a unique feature of spring / summer propagation. During high sunspot periods, these morning openings often extend up to 15 Meters.

A slight disturbance on the morning of May 4th (GMT), Wednesday evening local, lead to noticeable arctic flutter on Russian signals during the evening opening. The following morning, only one signal was heard from SE Asia, VR2IG, about 44 with QSB. He had

been 57 the day before. The evening opening to Russia closed around 0200Z the next night, 2 hours earlier than the night before.

These examples show how marginal these Polar Path openings can be, springing to life with a slight boost in MUF, and all but disappearing at the first sign of a geomagnetic disturbance. Bottom Line: Strike while the Iron is HOT or wait until the next "window of opportunity"!

ENJOY!

Unusual QSL Card

By the LongPath Staff

This month's card, or a portion thereof, shows AB7LK asleep at the proverbial switch, but keying fingers pushing him through a wee-hours CQ, or at least a C! Judging from the 429 RST, he may have dozed off due to inadequate aural stimulus.

Your own QSL can appear in this very spot next month. Send a picture to the LongPath interim editor at duncant1@ds-s.com with whatever you would like to say, and we'll take care of the rest.



s & Thx for nice QSO

UTC MHZ RST Mode

0357 7 429 CW