

The LongPath

A North Alabama DX Club Publication

Special points of interest:

- A Little Birdie
- Program Announcement
- Short Skip
- DX Contests
- Who Needs Sunspots
- 3B7C DXpedition

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

A Little Birdie Told Me So

By Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

A big brown truck brought a reel of UV-resistance rope to the loading dock at work, heralding the weekend's adventure: replacing my collection of too low, too closely-spaced, not-nearly-linear-enough dipoles with a single fan dipole at 46-or-thereabouts feet.

This transformation had been in the planning stage for months. With a sensible plan of attack, I reasoned, my venerable antennas could be safely removed and replaced by a cloud-tickling safely-guyed pushup mast which by itself would be the envy of the neighborhood. I dreamt the shiny new wires reaching to the very top of the UV-resistant masthead would suck DX out of the sky, delivering it with not a dB's loss thanks to the marvels of window line to a loss-less tuner, and thence to the radio. The reverse operation would be equally effective, spewing my signal to the far corners of the earth, with the occasional help of a 3-500Z.

These images constantly before me, the top 20' of the mast were assembled: antenna carefully coiled, guys attached to guy rings and rolled up, secured by color-coded tape, feedline leading down through 6" flexible standoffs. The remaining sections of mast needed to push this up to operating height were ready. Time to reach for the sky.

After the fifth additional four-foot mast section had been added to the bottom of this ever-heavier-and-wigglier assembly, I was counseled by XYL Janet to get help from (here paraphrasing) "another of your kind". A quick phone call and Bob, K8KI arrived via Harley to complete the lift. 46 feet in the air now, with a clamp at about 22 feet. Thanks, Bob!

With a couple of trips to the roof to retrieve the coiled-up color-coded ropes, guys were provisionally tensioned so that the contraption was at least safe. Adjusting tensions at the two guy levels from the ground end seemingly endless times, the mast was pretty straight, and very solid. Time for the last set of ropes, to stretch the antenna into operating position.

Back on the roof I was greeted by a newly-fledged chickadee sitting on a guy ring, chirping while I uncoiled the antenna in preparation for the final ground work. For a minute, I thought perhaps I'd gotten too close to the roof edge, and this winged messenger was there to carry me away, one direction or another.

Off the roof safely for the last time, the antenna now fully extended, it was late and there was a bit more work to do before getting on the air. The debut would wait 'til the next night, and everything would work. The little birdie told me so.

Alabama QSO Party

Program by Jim Johnson, KC4HW

The Alabama QSO Party is coming to a radio near you June 2nd and 3rd. Jim Johnson, KC4HW will tell us all about it Tuesday following dinner around 6:15 or so, and the business meeting at 7:00. Until then, check out the rules, county map and abbreviations, software support, and the 2006 contest results on www.alabamagsoparty.org. See you Tuesday!



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Meeting was called to order at 19:00 local time. DX Worked was discussed. No visitors were present.

Treasurer's Report:

Starting balance	3487.56
Plus membership dues	120.00
Minus expenses	120.00
Ending balance	3487.56

Expenses were for power at the repeater and cluster site.

March minutes in the LongPath were approved as published.

Tom D. mentioned a Space Weather Forum by Cornell University claiming that Solar Radio Burst can effect GPS and other communications. Dr. David Hathaway [whose Space Weather forums have been popular at many ham-fests, and who will present again this year. Debate over the upcoming cycle continues—see physicsweb.org/articles/news/11/4/7/1 and science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2006/21dec_cycle24.htm for opposing small cycle/big cycle views.—Ed.] was mentioned in part of the proceedings.

Old Business:

Under old business the surveys were passed out and many filled in. Look for

the results elsewhere in the LongPath.

New Business and Announcements:

Butch Schartau, KOBS has towers for sell. (contact at KOBS@arrl.net)

There has been a change in the DXCC rules and the DXCC checkers can now check VUCC, WAS and any card date. Still no 160m.

Adjourned at 19:15 local.

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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)

ARRL Front Page

The ARRL has announced it is withdrawing its controversial November 2005 *Petition for Rule Making* (RM-11306) calling on the FCC to establish a regulatory regime to segment bands by necessary bandwidth rather than by emission mode. The League cited "widespread misconceptions" surrounding the petition as a primary reason for deciding to remove it from FCC consideration. The ARRL left open the option of refileing the same or a similar petition in the future. (www.arrl.org)

Solar Cycle 24 Prediction

On April 25, a Solar Cycle 24 Prediction Panel, consisting of members from NOAA, NASA and other agencies looked at all available predictions and attempted to reach a consensus. It looks like the minimum between cycles 23 and 24 may not occur for another year, until March 2008, a year later than recently reported. The accuracy is expected to be plus or minus six months. The peak of cycle 24 is expected to occur in October 2011 if there is a large solar cycle, and August 2012 for a small cycle. (ARRL Contest Rate Sheet). On the other hand, just in the last week an active solar region was observed and noted on the qrparki web site which may indicate we have already hit the minimum. Only time (six months) will tell.

Field Card Checking

The ten year rule on field checking of QSL cards has been removed! Card checkers can now check cards for ANY CURRENT entity dating Nov.15, 1945 and later. Card checkers still cannot verify 160 meter cards or deleted entities.

May Contests

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

DXCC blog

The latest info on approved operations for DXCC credit and other juicy tidbits including information about card-checking at Dayton can be found at <http://www.arrl.org/blog/DXCC%20Dialog>

DX Operations

The BS7H operation to Scarborough is QRV as of this writing and will continue until around 00:00 UTC May 6 if they can hold out that long. A report on <http://www.scarboroughreef.com/> says "Everyone on the team has cuts from the coral. The closest access to any of the rocks is over coral and no one has been spared coral scrapes and cuts. Add to that over 100 degree heat and sunburn and you have a dangerous environment for all." Operators must endure 6 hours under only a small umbrella in the heat of day or 13 hours in the blackness of night. Personally, your writer thinks this is not an appropriate entity for DX operation or anything else - no maid service. I much prefer the mosquitoes of Grenada. Just checking to see if anybody is reading this column. Comments to Tom Duncan.

Dayton

Information on the forums at Dayton and other activities can be found at <http://www.hamvention.org/forums.htm>

New rigs

A copy of the Microsoft PowerPoint presentation for the FLEX-5000 software-defined radio that is going to be shown at Dayton is located at <http://support.flex-radio.com/Downloads.aspx?id=151>. One comment on the flex-radio reflector noted "from the front the 5000 kind of looks like a bar fridge. The view from the rear is downright exhilarating, however". In addition, Elecraft has just released the K3 - a new and improved DSP rig that you can build from a kit or buy already-built. Technical data can be found on the Elecraft web site. One of these rigs will be given away at FDIM preceding Dayton.

So long 'til next time.

What is the connection between the meter of this rhyme and a popular type of Morse code key?

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

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

*But now today, these ops are gray,
and software modes are growing,*

*Young ops turn up, like little pups,
so zeros and ones are flowing."*

73 es gud dx . . . de N4WBS

DX Contests

By Chuck Lewis, N4NM

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

May 5, 2000Z to May 6, 1959Z

Exchange: RS(T) plus Serial # or IT Province

See page 96, May QST and www.qsl.net/contest_ari

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

May. 12, 1200Z to May. 13, 1200Z

Exchange: RS(T) plus Serial #

See page 97, May QST and www.cq-m.andys.ru

Allessandro Volta RTTY DX Contest, 80-10M

May 12, 1200Z to May 13, 1200Z

Exchange: RST, plus S/N, and CQ zone

See page 97, May QST and www.contestvolta.com

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

May 19, 2100Z to May 20, 0200Z

Exchange: RS(T) plus Serial #

See page 97, May QST and www.lrsf.it/bcontest

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

May 19, 1800Z to May 20, 1800Z

Exchange: RS(T) plus Serial # or EA Province

See page 97, May QST and www.marc.org

All America Contest, (CW), 80-10M

May 19, 1500Z to May 20, 2359Z

Exchange: RST plus continent (CWJF add /M, /QRP, /YL)

See page 97, May QST and www.powerline.com.br/cwif

EU PSK DX Contest, 80-10M

May 19, 1200Z to May 20, 1200Z

Exchange: RST and Serial # (or EU area code)

See page 97, May QST and www.srars.org

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

May. 26, 0000Z to May 27, 2400Z

Exchange: RST plus serial #

See page 90, Mar. QST or www.cqwpwpx.com

OTHERS:

Portuguese Navy Day Contest, (PSK31)

1500Z-2100Z, May 5

Portuguese Navy Day Contest, (CW/SSB)

1500Z May 5 - 1500Z, May 6

RSGB 80m Club Championship, (SSB),

2000Z-2130Z, May 7

F.I.S.T.S. CW Club Spring Sprint (CW),

1700Z – 2100Z, May 12

VK/Trans-Tasman 80m Contest, (Phone)

0800Z-1400Z, May 12

RSGB 80m Club Championship, (DATA),

2000Z-2130Z, May 16

EU PSK DX Contest

1200Z, May 19 to 1200Z, May 20

RSGB 80m Club Championship, (CW),

2000Z-2130Z, May 24

VK/Trans-Tasman 80m Contest, (CW)

0800Z-1300Z, May 26

ARCI Hootowl Sprint (CW)

2000Z-2400Z LOCAL, May 27

IARU Region 1 Field Day, (CW)

1500Z, Jun 2 to 1459Z, Jun 3

RSGB National Field Day

1500Z, Jun 2 to 1500Z, Jun 3

RSGB 80m Club Championship, (Data)

2000Z-2130Z, Jun 4

ANARTS WW RTTY Contest

0000Z, Jun 9 to 2400Z, Jun 10

GACW WWSA CW DX Contest

1500Z, Jun 9 to 1500Z, Jun 10

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

Chuck, N4NM

Miscellanea

By the LongPath Staff

Hamfest approaches, and with it our chance to sponsor the **2007 Alabama Section Outstanding Youth Ham Award**. Last year, our own Robby Lock, KG4PLK, was recipient of this same award, known at the time as the Alabama Young Ham of the Year Award.

This year's budget includes funds for awards in excess of that required to pay

for this plaque. Officers and directors polled on this topic raised no objections, so the president informed Alabama Assistant Section Manager for Youth Rebekah Dorff, WG4Y that NADXC would again be pleased to sponsor this award.

He's back! **Bob Allphin K4UEE**, will be this year's Hamfest DX Banquet

speaker, telling us about his VU7 Lakshadweep DXpedition adventures.

Although ticket price has yet to be determined, expect the arrangements to be much like last year: 6:30pm or thereabouts, Saturday, August 18th, in the Von Braun Center ballet room.

Membership Survey Results

By Jason Amos, KD4BJW

Membership License Class		Equipment		Internet Resources	2	14%
Extra	13	Mobile rig:	8	ULS/CORES	1	7%
Tech	1	VHF HT	13	PRB1	0	0%
Averaged Years licensed:	35.2	UHF HT	7	Meeting Days		
Minimum	4	No HT	1	Bad Days	Mon	1
Maximum	58	QRP Operation:		Tue	Tue	2
(2 members)		Interested	8	Wed	Wed	1
Average Age:	56.4	Own QRP rig	5	Thu	Thu	1
Minimum	25	QRP Rigs: Elecraft KX-1, FireFly, IC-7000, Elecraft K2, Norcal 40		Fri	Fri	5
Maximum	78			Sat	Sat	5
Average Membership years:	17	DXpedition Participants	4	Sun	Sun	8
Shortest:	1		29%	Good Days	Mon	3
Longest:	~45	Programs		Tue	Tue	10
Average Meetings Attended in past year	9.7	Done Programs:	10	Wed	Wed	2
HARC Members:	8	Would do one:	8	Thu	Thu	1
Other Clubs:	6	How interesting are programs?		Fri	Fri	1
Ever operated in a contest?		Almost everyone was very pleased.		Sat	Sat	1
11	79%	Desired Program Topics:		Sun	Sun	0
Regular Contesters	7	Stations Design	13	Dinner		
Bands Covered:		Dxing tricks and tips	12	Attend Regularly	14	100%
160	8	Antennas	11	Dinner is Important	12	86%
80	13	Propagation	11	Web Site		
60	7	Equipment Reviews	10	A few members visit up to five times per month, but most monthly.		
40	13	Power Line Noise	10	Least useful items: cluster, archives, GO list, and bad links.		
30	13	Transmitter Tech.	10	Most useful: LongPath, roster, cluster [how's that for diverse opinions! - Ed.], program announcements		
20	13	Receiver Tech.	10	Changes: Update it more often, needs more modern look.		
17	12	Dxpeditons	9	LongPath		
15	13	Towers	9	Changes: Longer and more frequent technical content. More member profiles, kits, homebrew articles.		
12	12	RF Interference	9	Thanks to all who responded.		
10	14	Software Defined Radio	9			
6	10	PSK-31	8			
2	13	Contesting	7			
Modes Operated:		FCC issues	7			
CW	9	DXCC	7			
SSB	13	RF Exposure	6			
RTTY	10	Kits	6			
PSK	8	Logging Software	6			
SSTV	1	Principles of electronics	6			
		QRP	5			
		Solar Power	4			
		Beacons	4			
		Packet Cluster	4			
		QSL Routes	4			
		ARRL Org	3			
		Satellite Work	3			

Who Needs Sunspots to add to the DXCC Challenge Score

By Steve Werner, AG4W

I was a little discouraged when I only had 3 contacts with N8S and Tom N4KG had 25 contacts on multiple modes per band from 160 to 12 meters. I would of considered that a significant accomplishment at the top of the sunspot cycle. What made this interesting to me is that except for one or two days there were no sunspots at all. Before they closed up shop I was able to get 8 contacts. On 20, 17, and 15 meters I worked them on SSB and CW. I also worked them on 40 and 12 meter CW. I use wire antennas for 17 and 40 meters and a 2 element quad for 15 and 12 meters. I have a hill I am backed up against to the west so that is

a large disadvantage. I was totally impressed with the CW operators at N8S. They listened for the weak ones, particularly at the end of their stay, and had good control of the pileups right from the beginning. It was a little discouraging for me several times when I could hear them, they wanted Europe only. It was very surprising to me to get them on 12 meters with no sunspots. The openings were later in the evening than I would of expected. It has surprised me a number of times what can be worked in the dark on 10 and 15 meters and in the light on 40 meters. DX contests have always interested me because people are on the air when

they normally wouldn't try to make a contact and find out that the band is really open. The signals may not be armchair copy but communication is possible more often than you might predict. N8S proved that good operators can make a lot of contacts without sunspots by really paying attention to propagation and of course just trying. More often than not no one wants to call CQ on a dead band. March and April show 25 new band countries in the log with a few days to go in April. Not bad for the bottom of the sun spot cycle.

Steve AG4W

Last Month's Programs

By the LongPath Staff

The April NADXC meeting featured not only the advertised program *The Elecraft K2—An Education in Radio Design and Operation* by Kevin Hibbs, KG4TEI (complete with Kevin's "go kit" comprising the radio, power supply, key, and antenna), but an impromptu presentation by Jerry Montgomery, K4SAV, of his ultrasonic power line arc detector, patterned after W1TRC's article in April, 2006 QST.

Both these devices are beautifully constructed testimonials to the efforts of their builders. Both devices were brought to the meeting fully operational, and demonstrated to many interested members.

What a great double-whammy program! If you have something sitting at home which might be of interest to our knowledge-hungry membership, and it's of an appropriate size, bring it to a meeting. Nothing beats seeing the real thing, up close.

Thanks Kevin and Jerry!

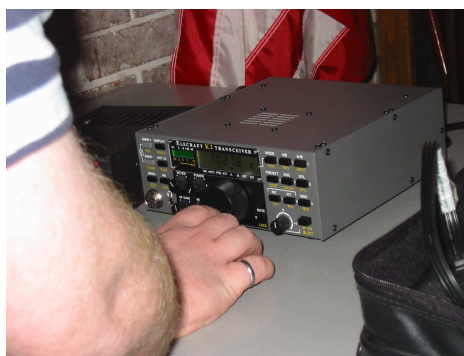
Photos courtesy Michael Werner, KF4BOG



K8KI: Watch where you're aiming that thing!

K4SAV: Careful what you say, or you'll be next.

W4WEG: Don't worry Bob, it's not loaded.



KG4TEI demonstrates the K2, fed by a less-than-optimal floor-mounted vertical.

3B7C DXpedition

5 Star DXers Association

The material below was excerpted from a complete description of the DXpedition to be circulated at the upcoming meeting:

The FSDXA team is planning a major DXpedition to Saint Brandon as 3B7C during September, 2007. There is no hotel or infrastructure, and we will use very basic living accommodations, including tents. The island is uninhabited except for a few fisherman. All food, water, generators, fuel, radios, and antennas will be shipped in.

Twelve stations will be activated, all provided by Yaesu. Mono-banders will be deployed for each HF band. On 40m, we will use our very successful 4-square vertical array and on 80m, two pairs of phased verticals for CW and SSB. On 160m, our full size Titanex antenna will be situated right next to the Indian Ocean.

The cost of 3B7C is very high...exceeding \$200,000! This figure does not include travel costs or the cost of living accommodations (tents) once on the island.

Our sponsorship drive has begun. I hope your club will be interested in becoming a 3B7C Club Sponsor, logos for which will appear on our QSL card (\$200.00 minimum for logo). Thanks in advance for your support.

73, Wes Lamboley, W3WL