TCDXA
TWIN CITY DX ASSOCIATION
Minnesota

Newsletter of the
Twin City DX Association
www.tcdxa.org

March, 2025

Inside this issue:

Gray Line Staff
KØAD
WAØMHJ
WØJMP
WØZF
AJ8B

Note from the President

Bert Benjaminson, WB0N, President

It's the best time of the year. Hamfest time! I love Hamfests not just for shopping for new toys, but for all the friends I get to see and talk to there. You know "eyeball QSO's". I try to make it to all local or semi local Hamfests. Someday I would love to get to Dayton, but financially that won't happen unless I win the lottery. It goes without saying that I also love our monthly meetings at Pub42. I have learned a lot from all the great ops that come there. When I joined TCDXA in March of 2003 I was a SSB only op with no DXCC's and now with the help and advice from club members I have my DXCC in 3 modes and on 8 bands. Thanks to all. Even if I am no longer a fulltime contester, I still had fun in the DX contests running 100w into wet noodle antenna's with over 1.2M points. Also, on a personal note, I am retiring April 17th so look out! I will be back playing at least until July when I might have to move to an apt. YUK!

Ok, now for club business: All the DXPeditions have been draining our surplus making future sponsorships a little tighter. As I see it, we have two choices. #1— Increase our membership, we could really use a membership chairperson to help in that endeavor. Of course it is hard to get volunteers. OR #2— Increase the yearly recommended donation which I feel might cost us in membership. Ok, so what do you all think is the right solution?

Finally, thank you to V.P Tom Weigel, AB0J, Secretary treasurer Mark Johns, K0JM, DX Grant Mgr. Mike Cizek, W0VTT, and Doug Arntson, K0PX. These are your 2025 board members! Thanks guys! And thanks to Larry Menzel, W0PR, and Pat Cain, K0PC, for joining in with running the AV at our meetings, with Tom AB0J being their emergency backup. In person attendance at Pub 42 has been good. Thank you all!

GL 73 ES GD DX DE

- WB0N Bert

Grayline History

Newsletters can be found at
https://tcdxa.org/gray-line-report-newsletter/

10 Years Ago in the Grayline

⇒ K1N— Navassa DXPedtion by Glenn Johnson, W0GJ

⇒ VP5S— 2015 ARRL DX CW

⇒ CE2/K0MD by K0MD

⇒ ARRL Contest Advisory Committee (CAC) Update by Al, K0AD

⇒ TCDXA Member Profile : N0IJ, John Baumgarten

20 Years Ago in the Grayline

⇒ W0GJ Received the "Special Award for Excellence" at the W9DXCC Convention

⇒ Behind the Scenes: 3Y0X—2005 by K0IR—Ralph

⇒ TCDXA Member Profile : WD0DAN—Scott Johnson

⇒ Logbook of the World Exclusive Update by N7NG—Wayne

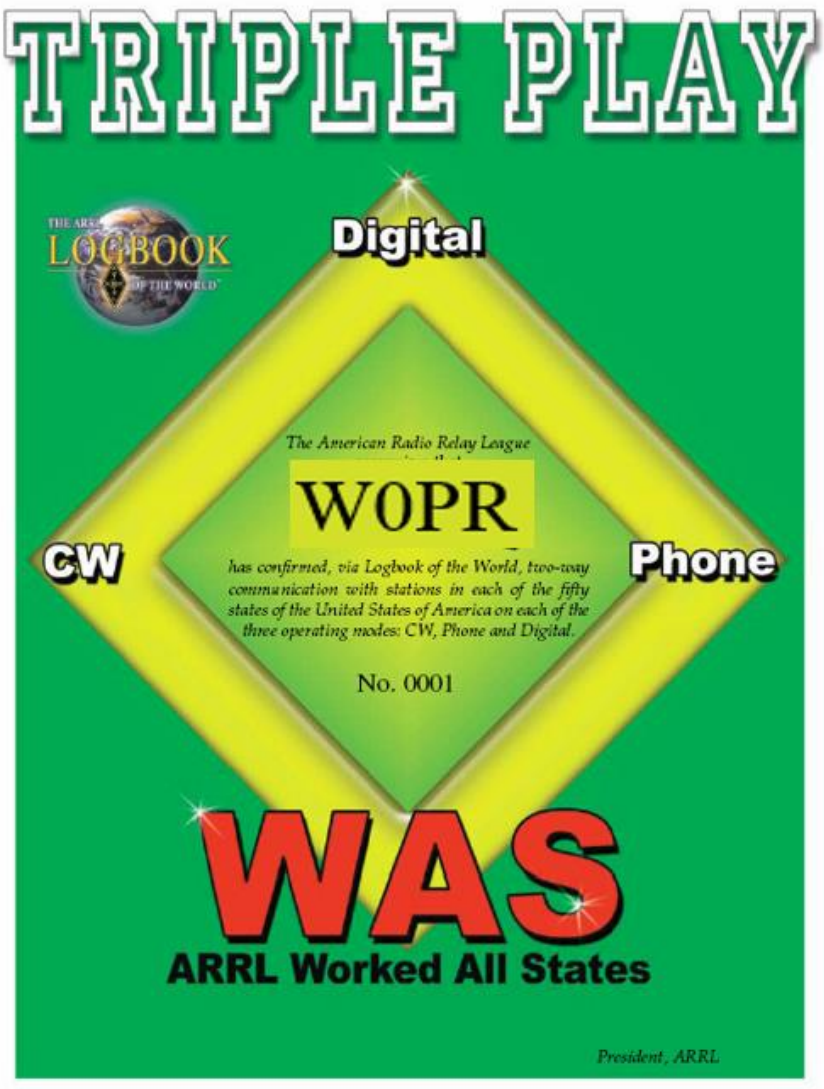
⇒ Contesting from VP5H, or, How We Spent Our 30th Wedding Anniversary by W0GJ—Glenn

⇒ K0OB Achieves DXCC Honor Roll

⇒ Electronix Servicing by K0IEA—Dave

⇒ 2005 Minnesota QSO Party—The Year of the Rover by K0AD—Al

Congratulations to Larry, W0PR, for achieving the ARRL Triple Play Award



Dollars for DX Report

Mike Cizek WØVTT—mgcizek@gmail.com
DX Grant Manager

DX funding requests slowed down this quarter. We only voted on one request in the last three months, but it was a big one; 3Y0K going to Bouvet in 2026.

LA7GIA et al have finally come up with a plan that is acceptable to NCDXF and have received their blessing and support. We have had requests for funding from them but I had been advised to hold off until they satisfied NCDXF that they had a workable plan. The DXpedition team is joining forces with a group of "most-travelled person" folks which has allowed them to afford to charter a suitable vessel with two helicopters. Our $2000 donation was approved by a vote of 57-2 and over half of us will be looking for an All Time New One from the team.

The recent VK9C and VK9X operations went quite well and even though I didn't get any new Challenge points from them, I had fun chasing them around the bands. The VU4AX guys are having a terrible time with poor conditions and so far I have only managed one QSO on 17m CW. Here's hoping the bands improve before they go QRT.

Thank you.
Mike Cizek WØVTT
TCDXA DX Grant Manager

DX Advisory Committee News— March 2025

Mike Cizek W0VTT, Dakota Division DXAC Representative

The DX Advisory Committee has been tasked with looking at the DXCC rules to see if there maybe any changes to improve the program and help it move forward. We have been meeting every two or three weeks and discussing different parts of the program and how it may need adapting to the changing DX scene. Our most recent discussion was on the use and legality of the Radio In a Box (RIB) and remote operations by DXpeditions. A previous discussion was on designing some sort of major award(s) recognizing country totals between the basic DXCC of 100 countries and the Honor Roll. Club members who have thoughts or feelings about potential changes to the DXCC award (including making no changes at all) may contact their DXAC representative.

Central Div: K9EL
Dakota Div: W0VTT
Midwest Div: NI0G

Healthy Contesting Habits

K0MD, Scott Wright, was presented with the QST Cover Plaque Award for his article that appeared in the November, 2024 issue of QST. Below is a "Congratulations plate" and a group picture. The article is reprinted with permission, copyright ARRL.

Congratulations, Scott!

Healthy Contesting Habits

Minimize the physical demands of contesting with these tips. Scott Wright, K0MD

Amateur radio contesting is a fun and competitive activity that's growing in popularity among ham radio operators of all ages.

Contesting is physically demanding, and big contests, such as the ARRL International DX CW and phone contests, require a commitment of up to 48 hours. This is equivalent to working a full-time job, all within the confines of a weekend (typically a Friday night through a Sunday night). It's no wonder so many contesters are exhausted by the time they return to work on Monday.

Let's review some healthy practices to consider while contesting (see the sidebar "Healthy and Unhealthy Approaches to Contesting" for more information).

Get Sufficient Sleep

Try to get enough sleep during the week leading up to the event. If you have difficulty sleeping, talk with your healthcare provider to see if you might have a sleep disorder. Much of the insomnia we see today is due to too much screen time after 6:00 PM and/or the consumption of too much caffeine after dinner.

Being well rested allows for alertness and freshness of mind, preventing common mistakes that can lead to missed information and score reductions. You may want to take a half day off work on the Friday before a major contest weekend to spend the afternoon getting some sleep. Having a 1- to 2-hour nap ahead of time will often prevent early fatigue during the first night.

I believe it's important to go to bed when you're tired during a contest weekend. Sleep deprivation and the use of stimulants to stay awake do not improve your accuracy and may lead to health consequences such as cardiovascular disease and early-onset type 2 diabetes mellitus. The use of stimulants such as highly caffeinated beverages can cause a heart attack and sudden cardiac death, especially among individuals younger than 50 years old. Use of these aids to stay awake while contesting may lead to premature health problems, or worse. No top contest score is worth this cost.

Eat a Nutritious Diet

Stick to eating healthful foods before, during, and after a contest. There are no data to suggest that carbohydrate loading, something frequently done by marathon runners, has any benefit with ham radio contesting. In fact, you may want to consume fewer calories during a contest weekend because you'll be more sedentary than usual. Keep some fresh vegetables available to snack on — carrots, radishes, broccoli, cauliflower, and small quantities of nuts are likely your best options. Of course, you should stay hydrated as well. Drink plenty of water and/or non-caffeinated, sugarless beverages to counter any dehydration induced by the heat from your shack lighting and the warmth of your tube amplifier. Allow yourself to take bathroom breaks to avoid any risks to your kidneys.

Set Up an Ergonomic Station

Design your station to minimize the damage from injuries associated with repetitive motion. Adjust the table so that the keyboard and computer monitor(s) are at appropriate heights for your arms and head to avoid straining your neck, back, or wrists and arms. I experienced significant neck strain one contest season until I realized my wall-mounted monitors were several inches too high for my height. Now I use a desk-mounted monitor that prevents such strain. Find a comfortable chair that supports your lower back; I typically recommend gaming chairs. I also operate standing for periods of time while contesting, because it allows me to stretch my back and legs, restores circulation to my lower extremities, and combats fatigue. Because of this, I use wireless keyboards that I can move to a shelf on my operating desk when I want to stand. Someday, I hope to try a walking tread- mill desk or stationary bicycle while contesting.

Take Regular Breaks

Most contest advice focuses on keeping your body in the chair to maximize your score. This advice is good, but like all things, it becomes a hindrance when taken to an extreme. I recommend you take regular breaks to clear your mind, restore your focus, and stretch your muscles. The breaks can be as short as 5 minutes or as long as 30 minutes; you'll figure out what works for you.

Attend to Your Mental Health

Contesting can become an obsession, especially if you're an extremely competitive person. Talk with loved ones to determine if frequent contesting is altering your mood or keeping you from being engaged and involved with your family and friends. There are no awards given at the end of a year, decade, or lifetime for completing a given number of contests. It's not uncommon to become irritated during a contest at typing mistakes you make or with the poor operating practices of those you meet on the air, but there's no reason to let your frustration boil into anger, which can raise your blood pressure, trigger a heart attack or stroke, or simply rob you of the fun and joy of the contest activity. If you're Finding yourself getting frustrated, take a short break, have a bite of food, take a walk, or change bands.

Maintain Life Balance

You're ultimately responsible for the choices you make with contesting. If you feel that going all out for 48 hours is impacting your ability to work the Monday following a contest weekend, then finish operating early enough on Sunday to recover and prepare for the work week. Contesting is part of our hobby; it's not a way of life or a source of income.

Healthy and Unhealthy Approaches to Contesting

Healthy Habits

· Focusing on the fun of operating and worrying less about the score

- Striving to improve skills with communication and radio operation, not just earning a high score
- Savoring personal achievements with improving metrics and meeting goals
- Reconnecting with friends on the air
- Discovering more about propagation and band performance
- Learning to set and achieve goals
- Tempering personal expectations about what can be achieved
- Practicing gratefulness for the opportunity to be on the air and making contacts

Unhealthy Habits

- Depriving self of sleep for more contesting
- Excessive use of stimulants
- Dehydration
- Repetitive use of strained body parts from a non-ergonomic station
- Anger, with associated changes in blood pressure
- Poor posture, with associated joint and back pain
- Obsession with winning, especially to the point of detrimental effects on family and friendships

Stay in Shape During the Off Season

Professional athletes stay in shape year-round. We should approach contesting health in the same way. The most successful contesters I know practice outside of the contest season to improve skills, such as copying CW despite noise, expanding their understanding of station and/or logger operations, and regularly participating in events that keep their SO2R skills fresh.

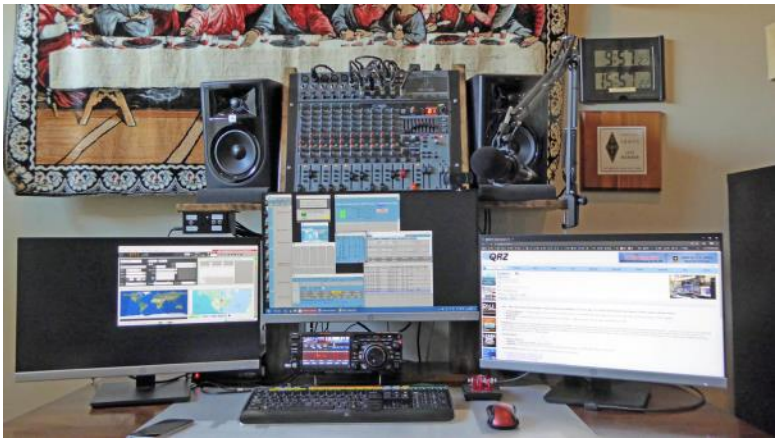
Additionally, the healthiest contesters I know, mentally and physically, exercise regularly during and outside of the contest season. Some are runners and credit running for their stamina while participating in longer contests. Consider starting an exercise routine to improve your overall health. Lose any excess weight, and work with your healthcare provider to manage any medical conditions you may have, such as hypertension, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, COPD, and arthritis. Work with a mental health coach on any psychological issues that may be impacting your ability to enjoy contesting.

Above all, stay connected with your community of contest friends, because they make the contest contacts worthwhile during the season.

Scott Wright, KØMD, has been a ham for 47 years and enjoys DXing and contesting most of all. He is a past editor of NCJ and a past member of the ARRL Contest Advisory Committee. Scott has an SO2R contest station at his home in Minnesota, where he enjoys a range of contest events. He also operates overseas in contests as travel allows. Scott can be reached at drscott.wright@gmail.com.

The Deck Vertical

By Roger Roth, K0MPH



Can you still play radio when you no longer live in a place with plenty of room for antennas? This is the story of one ham's attempt to stay on the air in the after-retirement years.

In the year 2000 we moved to our retirement home on a city lake in Maple Grove Minnesota. The lot was about half an acre and sprouted 80- and 40-meter verticals, a 160- L in the trees, and a fan dipole (20,15,10 meters) in a tree. Due to set back restrictions on the lake, there was no place for a tower, so a hex beam was mounted on a roof tower. This modest 100-watt station was able to work 275 countries, almost work 10 Band Worked All States (5 band-states missing), and earn numerous contest certificates and plaques. The sunspot cycle 24 surge helped immensely.

But as time went on it was evident that we would soon not be able to take care of the property, and the house wasn't as senior friendly as it should be. We moved to a new stand-alone town home within half a mile of downtown Maple Grove. Great location. Community Center, health club, Towne Greene amphitheater, Central Park, library, post office, more than 50 restaurants, every kind of retail store we might need within a mile. Biking trail across the street and nine blocks to church (each with a stop light) are big pluses for me. A Homeowners Association (HOA) mows the lawn and shovels the snow. But what about radio?

Going Remote

About the time we moved to the town house, my daughter and husband bought a lake cabin about an hours' drive away. With high-speed internet at the cabin, she permitted me to install a remote station there. A low band 43 foot vertical with remote tuner and a high band fan dipole at 20 feet in a tree were installed. A cabinet for the radio (Flex 6400), remote power control, and antenna control was fabricated, tested at home, and installed at the cabin. The outdoor remote antenna switching box from the lake house was put into service for antenna switching. The low band vertical worked well but the high band dipole was not effective because it was too low. Post COVID, the cabin evolved into a full-time home. The tree with the dipole was cut down and the vertical was moved to make room for a garage.

It soon became evident there was no room for an effective antenna at the cabin. Overall, the remote station was one frustration after another. Flex Radio contributed to the frustration with their slow pace of fixing bugs important to remote operation. Now what? Radio would have to be at the town home.

HOA Rules

The town home HOA Rules and Regulations states: "No antenna may be installed on the Property except in accordance with federal law." But for several years I had temporary antennas fastened to the deck railing for testing radios or special events with no complaints. First a hustler mobile whip. Then a collapsable fiberglass pole (collapsed most of the time), and then a 20/40 trap vertical. So, I thought reasonable accommodation might apply and I could put up limited antennas without asking permission as long as: 1) Cannot be seen from the front of the house. 2) Does not interfere with lawn maintenance and snow removal. 3) Painted neutral colors to limit visual impact. So far this has worked for me. Three neighbors can see the antenna from their decks. And one neighbor can see the antennas from her house. The antennas are visible from the street behind the house.

The Antennas (October 2024)

There are two verticals as shown in figure 1. The vertical on the right is a fan vertical (DX commander style) for 20, 15, and 10-meters. There are two 20-meter radials, and two 15-meters radials fastened under the deck. There is a vertical wire running along the support post making it a vertical dipole on 10-meters. The vertical on the left is a 24-foot fiberglass pole with a wire inside for 80, 40 and 30-meters.

Figure 1. Low and high band verticals.

Figure 2. 80-meter radial wrapped around the house. With 30 and 40-meter traps.

There are two 80-meter radials wrapped around the house. They have 30 and 40-meter traps. See figure 2.

Under the deck is a remote auto tuner. See figure 3 (Right). For 80-meters a 22 micro henry loading coil helps the auto tuner find a match.

Figure 3. Low band remote auto tuner, balun, and 80-meter loading coil.

Also under the deck is an antenna control box. See figure 4. (Below Right)Left to right is a bias-T for remote antenna tuner power, homemade antenna relay switch box, control signal connection panel, and a homebrew Arduino based antenna controller capable of switching 24 outputs and reading 4 analog inputs.

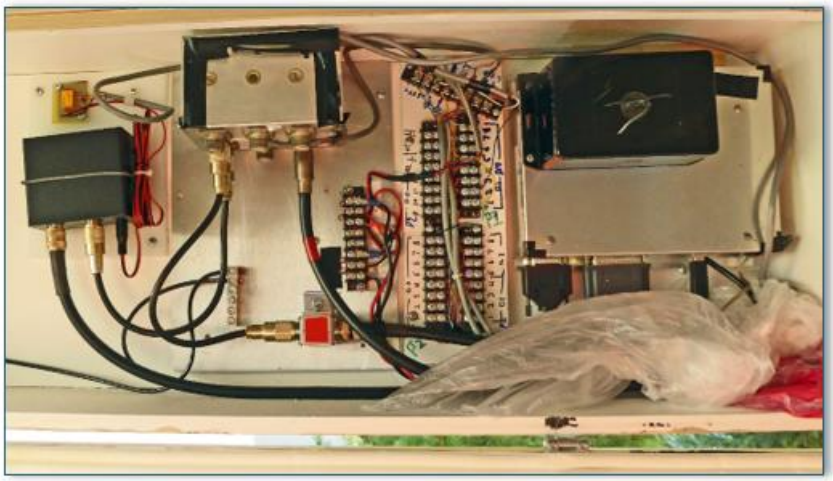


Figure 4. Antenna control and switch box.

The antenna controller is commanded via wi-fi by an app running on the shack computer. See figure 5. (Right) The app reads the radio transmit frequency via a com port and automatically selects which antenna to connect. The automatic selection can be manually overridden. In addition, remote antenna tuning at low power can be manually initiated.

Figure 5. Antenna control App. Reads transmit frequency from radio, selects antenna, and commands antenna selection and tuning.

RFI

With the antennas so close to the house, RFI is an issue. Transmitting has tripped ground fault interrupters, tripped arc fault interrupters, interfered with the washing machine, and interfered with shack audio. The generous use of RFI suppression beads has solved many problems. Susceptible ground fault interrupters were replaced. Moving the 80-meter radials a bit has helped. Placing RF beads on the coax feedline and 12 vdc power cable to the antennas in several places has helped the most. Arc fault interrupters are the most troublesome. Likely this will be an on-going issue.

There is RFI radiating from every electronic device in my house and the neighbor's houses. Some radiation is strong enough to interfere with receiving signals from distant stations. For instance, the shack's computer monitors create birdies on 20 and 15 meters that are not eliminated with RFI suppression beads. The most troublesome interference wipes out 3 KHZ wide swaths of 40, and 20-meters every 30 to 40 KHZ. Identification and suppression of RFI sources is on the to do list.

RF Safety

Calculations for the minimum safe distance from antennas can be made using the ARRL's RF exposure calculator. For a 100-watt transmitter and 10-meter vertical (worst case) the minimum safe distance (controlled environment) is about 1.5 feet. Transmissions should not be made when someone is on the deck. And running more power would not be safe (and cause more RFI).

Does It Work?

The verticals live up to their reputation. They radiate equally poorly in all directions. Furthermore, modelling shows that the direction away from the radials (northeast) is down 3 to 5 DB from a well-grounded vertical. Since modelling did not include the house wiring and clutter, it is likely that modelling is optimistic. The antennas are not competitive, but contacts can still be made. I am not likely to make honor roll, 10 band DXCC, 10 band WAS, or win contest certificates with these antennas. But when conditions allow, I can still make contacts with hams around the world and still participate in the great amateur radio hobby, even after downsizing during retirement.

VP8G DXPedition Report

Gerben Menting, PG5M

Reprinted with permission from the January 2025 edition of Solid Copy, the journal of CWOPS.org

Like most other DXPeditioners, I am constantly exploring destinations for my next DXpedition. This search is not simply a look on the Most Wanted List, but also involves all aspects of how to get there/ accessibility, can it be a suitable location for setting up station, power supply, local support, etc. For me there is also an element of general interest in remote locations.

The Falkland Islands was one of the destinations that I always had an interest in visiting. But how does it rank on the Most Wanted List? (MWL) You never see this mentioned as a highly demanded country for DXers. However, when I looked at the MWL in a bit more detail, I found out that it ranks low for SSB and Digital, but for CW it was surprisingly high. The table below shows the details for most continents. As a CW operator, my interest was born, and I decided to take further steps to start this project.

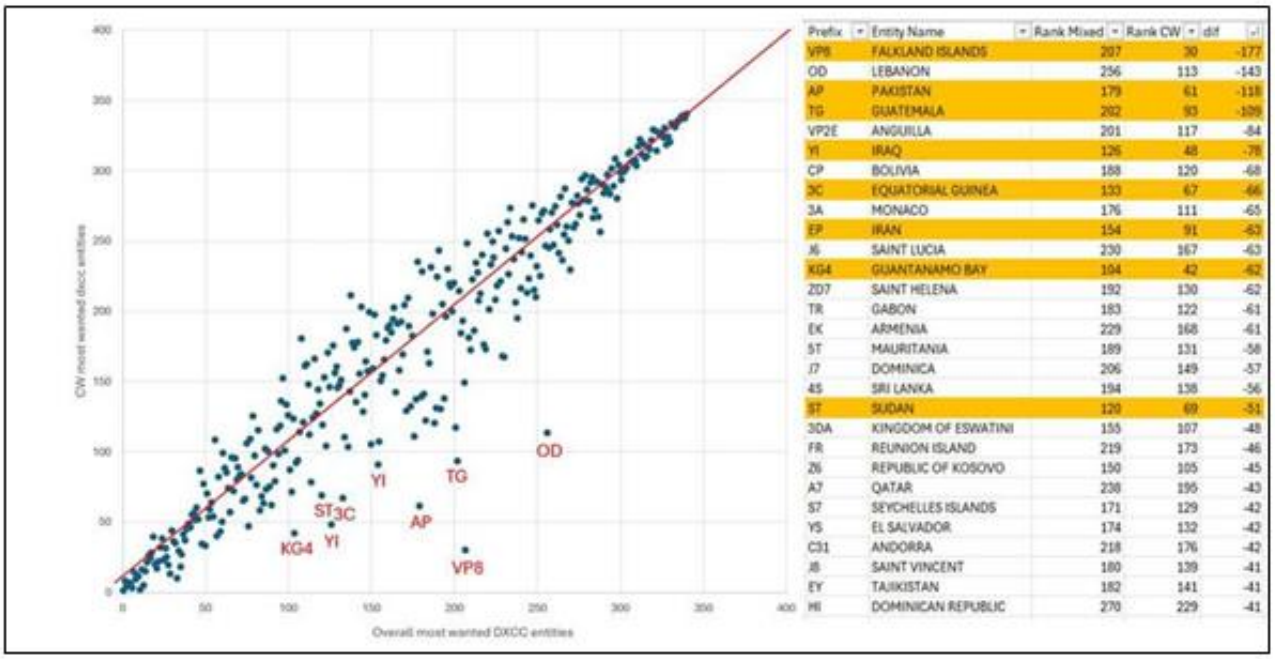
Rank	EU	W-EU	E-EU	NA	NA-W	NA-E	AS	VK/ZL	Global
CW	27	36	23	38	54	37	27	24	30
SSB	204	217	193	223	234	205	171	187	
Digi	218	225	208	234	246	225	205	158	

Source: Clublog

Some time later, Jose, CT1BOH, posted an even more detailed chart on X, confirming my analysis. (Top of next page.)

First thing was to obtain a license and that turned out to be easy. I requested the VP8G call sign and to my surprise, I got the license with the VP8G call sign in just 2 days after the application. Now I had to find a suitable location and the transport to the island.

In general, it is not too easy to find hotels that have sufficient space around for setting up antenna, but even when they have, they will not allow you to do so. The other issue is the use of LED lights and solar panels that cause interference. When I was surfing the internet for radio operations from the Falklands, I came across a report from G3ZAY and G7VJR who were operating from Darwin Lodge in 2010. When I looked it up on Google Earth, I could understand why they took that location. Close to water and just three other houses in the area.



Prefix	Entity Name	Rank Mixed	Rank CW	dif
VP8	FALKLAND ISLANDS	207	30	-177
OD	LEBANON	256	113	-143
AP	PAKISTAN	179	61	-118
TG	GUATEMALA	202	93	-109
VP2E	ANGUILLA	201	117	-84
YI	IRAQ	126	48	-78
CP	BOLIVIA	188	120	-68
3C	EQUATORIAL GUINEA	133	67	-66
3A	MONACO	176	111	-65
EP	IRAN	154	91	-63
J6	SAINT LUCIA	230	167	-63
KG4	GUANTANAMO BAY	104	42	-62
ZD7	SAINT HELENA	192	130	-62
TR	GABON	183	122	-61
EK	ARMENIA	229	168	-61
5T	MAURITANIA	189	131	-58
J7	DOMINICA	206	149	-57
4S	SRI LANKA	194	138	-56
ST	SUDAN	120	69	-51
3DA	KINGDOM OF ESWATINI	155	107	-48
FR	REUNION ISLAND	219	173	-46
Z6	REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO	150	105	-45
A7	QATAR	238	195	-43
S7	SEYCHELLES ISLANDS	171	129	-42
YS	EL SALVADOR	174	132	-42
C31	ANDORRA	218	176	-42
J8	SAINT VINCENT	180	139	-41
EY	TAJIKISTAN	182	141	-41
HI	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	270	229	-41

Figure 1 - Courtesy of Jose Nunes, CT1BOH

I contacted the hotel with the request if I could use my radio station when staying at their place. I quickly got a positive response. Next, I started to ask questions about whether I could place antennas in the area around the hotel, if cables could be brought into the room and if there was ample table space to place my radio equipment. It was advised that Renato, the manager, should answer all these questions.

Renato turned out to be a perfect host and did everything possible to help me get things organized. He made pictures and video clips to show the details of my room. When I showed him a picture of the planned set-up, he told me he would replace the twin bed with a single bed and put two dining tables in the room. With that, my room was well prepared.

The other remaining part was transportation. I had heard that military flights were available from the UK, so I started to explore that choice. There is a military base at Brize Norton (close to Oxford) from where they have regular flights to the Falklands, with a refueling stop at Ascension Island. These flights are operated by Air Tanker. There is a mixture of military and civil passengers on these flights. After a few enquiries I finally made a booking. Now the last piece was to travel from my home to Brize Norton. Flying from Amsterdam was not an option as you cannot fly to Brise Norton and would require extra road/rail transport. Finally, the most suitable possibility was to drive in my car to Brize Norton via the Calais Folkestone tunnel.

The flight would be at 00:35 local time, so I could make it the same day traveling by car. However, if anything went different (for instance with customs), or getting into trouble with the car, I would miss my flight. Therefore, I decided to travel one day earlier. One other issue was to find a place to park my car during the stay in the Falklands.

After checking with several hotels in the neighborhood, I found one with enough guarded parking space and no extra costs.

With that, everything was in place to start my next DXpedition. For the setup of the station, I used the same configuration as I used for the VP6G Pitcairn operation.

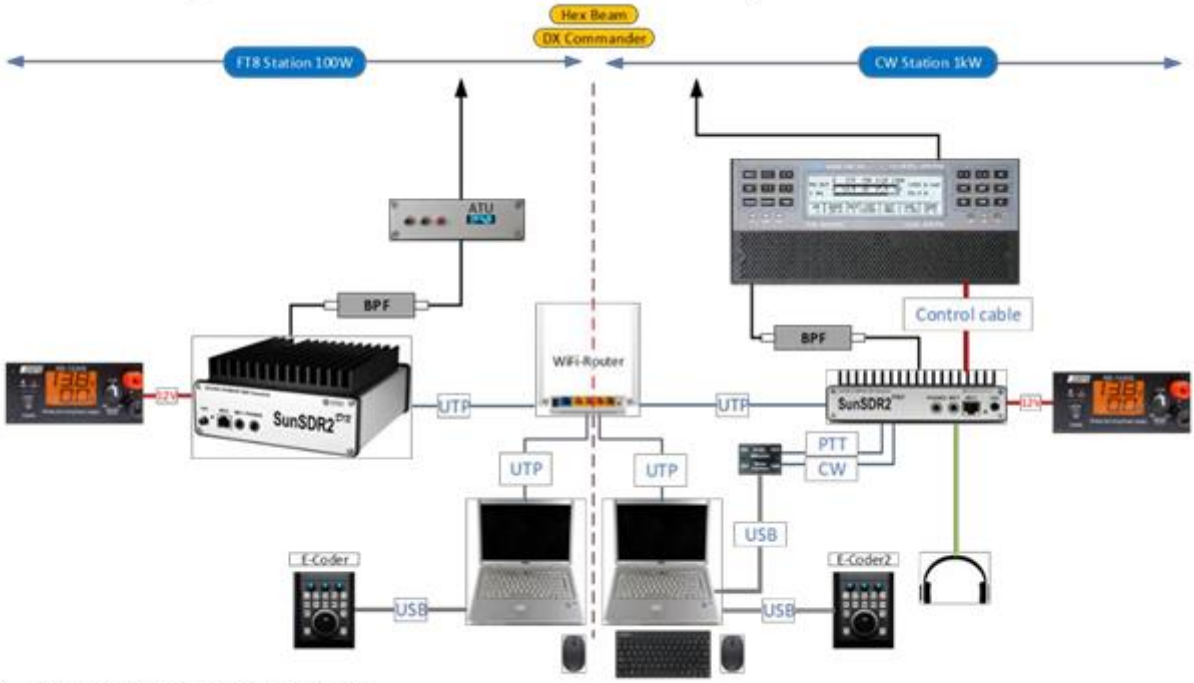


Figure 2 - VP8G planned station setup.

With the above configuration I would be able to run two stations in parallel, given enough distance between the antennas and using BPFs.

On the radio side nothing changed although I left the e-Coder for the FT8 station home as it helped to reduce weight. For the antenna-part, I choose again for the DX Commander and a Hexbeam. The DX Commander was a proven concept for me and the antenna was ready.

The Hexbeam was another case. At Pitcairn I used a lightweight G3TXQ DXpedition version Hexbeam. That version had issues with rain (causing high SWR) and took quite some time to assemble. I also donated that Hexbeam to a local HAM on Pitcairn. I needed a new Hexbeam and decided to buy the SP6CYN version. The Dutch distributor Ham Radio Land was so kind to sponsor me for a next DXpedition and offered the antenna for a reduced price. The antenna is of high quality and made of excellent quality materials. However, weight is always a crucial factor for planning my DXpeditions and assembling time is important. Therefore, I decided to build my own DXpedition-version Hexbeam.

After a lot of research and considerations, I was ready to construct my own version. I had decided to use the K4KIO design and use the SP6CYN fiber spreaders tubes as they are of particularly good quality. That meant using only aluminum for the metal parts, welding the spreader holders instead of using clamps and using different means of wire guides.

Figure 3 - 81KG of luggage at check-in at Brize Norton RAF

This all helped to reduce weight and shorten the assembling time. A complete description of my Hexbeam is https://dx.to/hexbeam/

The next major hurdle was packing all equipment, materials, and personal stuff. The airline allowed each passenger to carry one suitcase with a weight of 27KG and hand carry a small bag of 9KG. Obviously, I would need more luggage, so the challenge was to get it all in two other suitcases/bags, each also 27KG. Since I needed a small 6m telescopic aluminum mast (for the Hexbeam), which 140cm long and the fiber spreader tubes of 125cm, it was necessary to carry this in a sturdy 150cm long bag. Also, the Spiderbeam pole for the DX Commander and the roll of 70m long coax cable were included which made it all together 27KG.

The second suit- case held the SPE amplifier, parts of the Hexbeam, a roll of 30m coax cable, guy wires, etc.

Finally, all together I had 3x 27KG of luggage plus a backpack.

Although the flight with Air Tanker looks like any other civilian flight, the booking is different. At the booking, you get one suitcase of 27KG, and hand carried luggage of 9KG included. Excess luggage cannot be booked in advance and needs to be requested only two weeks before departure. It should be noted that excess luggage is charged at GBP10/KG, not cheap! Explaining that I had to be sure that the excess luggage was necessary to travel with me, otherwise I had to cancel the whole trip, did not help. Two and a half weeks before departure I made my request for excess luggage, complete with a picture and dimensions. It was only on Monday that I got my confirmation for a flight on Wednesday!

On Tuesday morning at 05:00hr left home for a long drive to the UK. Everything went according to plan and arrived in my hotel around 16:00hr. Plenty of time to relax. I also received an e-mail saying that the flight would leave 2 hours earlier, now 22:35 on Wednesday instead of 00:35 on Thursday. The next day I took a taxi at 16:30hr to the Brize Norton air base. From that moment it was unclear to me what exactly would happen. First, we were picked up from the main gate by a minibus to transport us to the air terminal. The rest was like any other check-in at an airport and the many hours of waiting started.

The flight to the Falklands made a refueling stop of 2 hours on Ascension Island. We arrived around 14:00hr local time (GMT-3) at Mount Pleasant, the RAF air base. I was collected by Renato, the manager of Darwin House. It took 45 minutes to reach the hotel at Darwin Settlement.

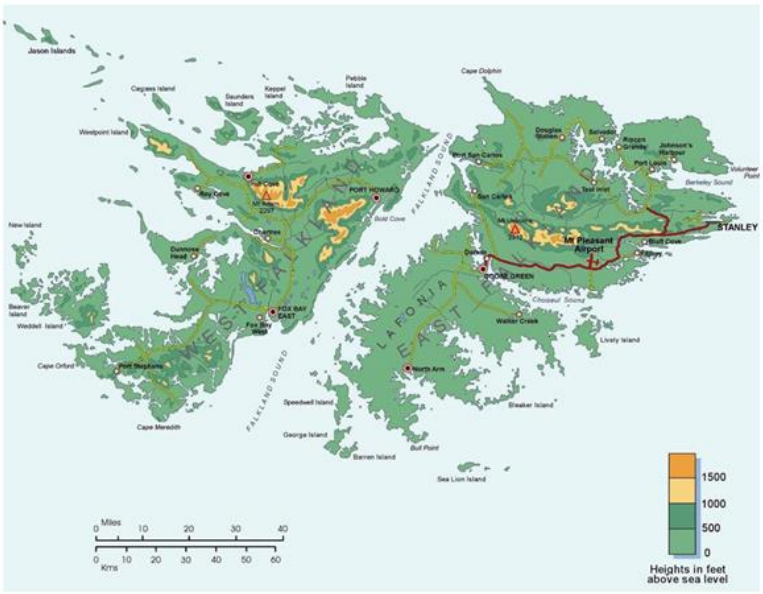


Figure 4 - Courtesy of Mapsland

Because the flight came in earlier gave me extra time on Thursday 14 November to work outside on the antennas. Most important was to have an antenna that could also cover the lower bands during the night, and therefore I started to work on the DX Commander. The weather was good (no rain and mild winds) and at that time I did not realize how different the weather could be.

First, I rolled out the 70m coax cable to allocate the place for the DX Commander. After the DX Commander was set up and provided with a second set of guy wires higher up the mast, the out- side work for that day was finished. The next day Mario VP8A/VP8EME came by as a surprise. It turned out that he also has a house at Darwin settlement, just some 200 meters away from the hotel. We had a nice conversation and also briefly discussed the antenna guying. I mentioned that I brought some small guy anchors, as bringing large anchors would be very costly. Not much later he delivered 5 large guy anchors which I used to replace for my own anchors at the DX Commander. Later this proved to be essential for keeping the mast up during the storm.

Figure 5 - DX Commander with 2 sets of guy wires

Figure 6 - 32 radials, 3.5 meters long and extra-large guy anchors.

Figure 7 - Very comfortable and "Radio Shack"

Next, I started to assemble the radios. As mentioned before, Renato had converted the room into a real amateur radio shack. There was enough space to create a convenient operating position. The two coax cables were entering the room via a window.

After everything was connected and tested, I started my CW operation and had my first QSO on 15 November at 17:26Z with N4RJ on 12m. From that moment the pile-up started.

The next day, I started at 07:00 local time to assemble the Hexbeam. Putting the antenna together and fixing the antenna wires was a bit difficult with the strong wind.

Putting a Hexbeam on a mast can be a real challenge. During my preparation, I asked Renato (manager Darwin Hotel) if he had a tall ladder and if there would be someone to help me set up the Hexbeam. Later I reviewed many pictures of the hotel and found that the fence was made with big wooden poles about 1.5m high which could be a good base for the telescopic mast.

When the Hexbeam was ready, I fixed the telescopic mast to a pole of the fence, using two straps and tie wraps. Even without guy wires, the mast could not move anymore, so did not need someone to support me. With a short stair, I was able to place the Hexbeam on the mast and pushed the sections up and secured them with the clamps. After that, the four guy wires were fixed to the fence and a guy anchor.

I fixed two ropes to two of the spreaders to be used to keep the antenna in position or to turn the antenna in position. A quite simple and effective method.

In total it took only a few hours to have the Hexbeam ready and connected to the radio. With that, the setup was completed, and I could focus only on operating. Later I experienced that unexpected work was waiting, due to the weather. As Falklanders say: “In the Falklands you can have 4 seasons in a day”, something I have experienced during my stay.

Figure 8 - The Hexbeam fully assembled.

16-11-2024

In the morning it was nice sunny weather but, in the afternoon, heavy wind with snow and hail. I was happy the outside work was completed.

I had issues getting the second FT8 station working. Finally got the SunSDR2 DX working with FT8 and in the evening, I started with FT8 on 40m and CW on 20m, using BPFs but had to reduce power to 400W on CW.

Figure 9 - Hexbeam on an approx. 5m tall mast which was fixed with straps to a pole of the fence.

17-11-2024

I woke up around 04:00 and took a shower and started working on 40m CW with full power. Had a huge pileup from Japan with strong signals and a very quiet band. Later I changed bands.

Interestingly, Japan was to the south, but there is a high hill nearby in southern direction but JA's were very loud with my Hexbeam pointing to the north. In the afternoon it was raining.

19-11-2024

From my operating position, I could look through the window and see the Hexbeam and the DX Commander in the distance. Although I have seen that the DX Commander was kept in position very well with the two guy sets, all of a sudden, I saw it was tilted. I went outside to see what was going on. It turned out that one of the clamps was not tightened enough and as a result one section glided down. In the heavy wind I could not do the repair work so took the antenna down and left it for a moment when there would be less wind. That day I made a short trip with Renato to visit Goose Green village, not far away from Darwin settlement.

20-11-2024

We had strong winds and storm, and I was anxious watching the antennas. I was a bit concerned that things would go wrong and destroy my antennas.

Due to the storm, the 20m and 17m wires came loose from the fiber spreaders. Surprisingly, even with that situation, I was still able to work on the other bands.

The fact that the wires got loose from the wire guides is because I used open S-hooks. They are easy to install the wires, but now it turned out they are not a desirable choice for situations with heavy wind. Originally, I had chosen to use small stainless steel carabiner hooks. Obviously, back home I will replace the open S-hooks with stainless steel carabiner hooks.

Figure 10 - DX Commander out of service.

The situation was now that the DX Commander was down and the Hexbeam had two bands that needed to be repaired. However, with the storm this was not possible. I did not want to lower the Hexbeam and not have the guy ropes securing the mast. I did not want to risk the mast to be damaged.

Renato asked me if I was interested in joining him for a trip to Port Stanley. With the antenna situation I thought it was a good opportunity. It was the only opportunity to see Port Stanley and started the 2-hour drive. During the visit to Port Stanley there was still a storm and sometimes it was difficult to keep yourself standing on the roadside.

I visited the museum, which was interesting and informative. There was also a small building about telecommunication. When visiting this part of the museum, I discovered that amateur radio and telegraphy were extensively exposed. A display with QSL cards, straight keys, radios, etc.

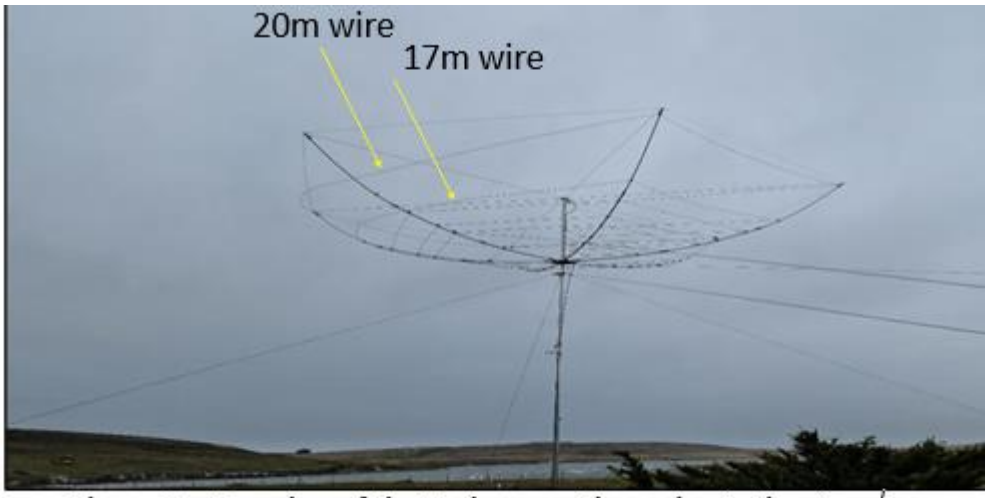


Figure 11 - Two wires of the Hexbeam got loose due to the storm

After returning back at the hotel in Darwin, the weather completely changed, and it was sunny with little wind. This was the right time to do the work on the antennas. I fixed the wires on the Hexbeam and brought the DX Commander in shape again. Together it took only 45 minutes. I was fully operational again.

21-11-2024

Being on the Falklands, I wanted to see penguins in the wild, but it would need a journey to one of the penguin colonies. An unexpected opportunity happened as a visitor of the hotel had planned a trip to New Heaven, a place at the Falkland Sound and where the ferry goes to Port Howard on West Falkland. Fortunately, I could join this trip, so we went for a half hour drive to see the Gentoo penguins.

Figure 13 - Visiting the Gentoo penguin colony at New Heaven.

23-11-2024

During the weekend of 23-24, there was the CQ WW DX CW Contest. Normally I try to avoid a contest during my stay, but based on the available flights, I could not avoid this one. During the contest weekend I had to focus on the WARC bands and FT8. However, even the FT8 segments were covered with contest stations and conditions were not that good on the higher WARC bands. As a result, the weekend resulted in fewer QSO's.

25-11-2024

After 00:00Z I started to run CW on 40m for those who were still chasing me on that band.

Based on the experience with the weather during my stay, I did not want to risk taking down the antennas and bringing in all the materials during rain, hail/snow of storm. Therefore, I announced that I would operate till 12:00Z.

I first started to work on the DX Commander. I brought all the materials and wires to the yard of the hotel for further preparation and packing. Also, the 70m coax had to be coiled so it would fit in the bag again.

As the weather was favorable, I continued the operation until 13:08Z when I made the last QSO with HB9MEJ on 10m.

It took me till 18:00 local time to pack all antenna materials and after dinner I completed the packing of my luggage, ready for the trip back home.

26-11-2024

The next morning, we left the hotel at 05:00 local time for the Mount Pleasant air base. After the check-in procedure, the waiting started again. On the flight back, we made a refueling stop on Ascension Island again.

27-11-2024

Back at Brize Norton air base early in the morning, things went smoothly. We were transported to the main gate from where I had to call a taxi to take me back to the hotel where my car was parked. It was a bit difficult to get a taxi and they all had long waiting times. When I finally was picked up by a taxi, I was told that there were floodings in the area and the reason for the delay.

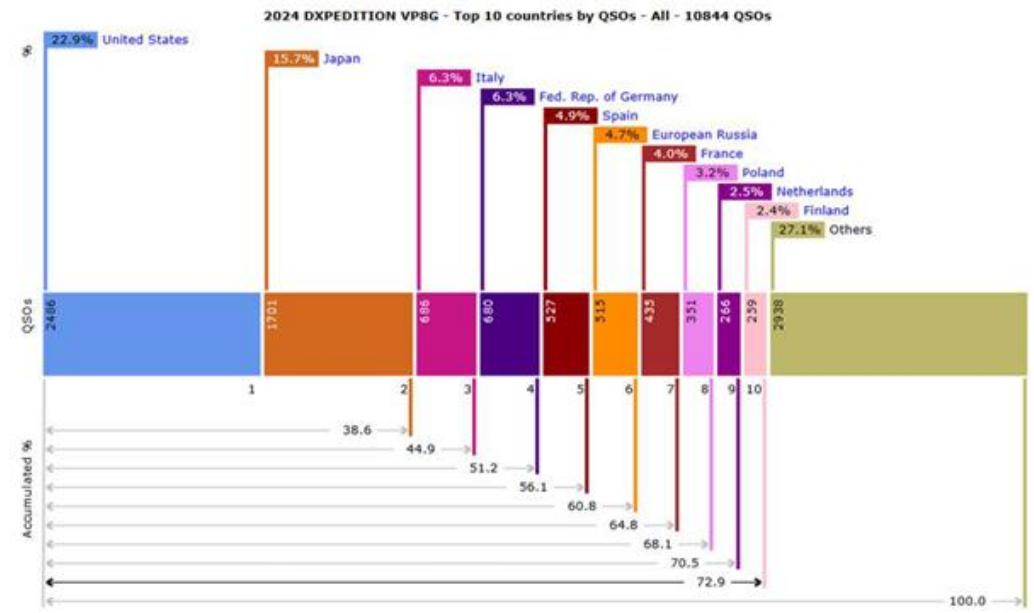
When we came close to the hotel, the road was closed due to flooding. The taxi driver chose an alternative route but when we were about 500m from the hotel, the road was also closed due to the floodings. Fortunately, I had a truly kind taxi driver who took my heavy 27KG bag and carried it to the hotel entrance. I took my two suitcases and followed him.

I packed my luggage into my car and drove back to the Netherlands where I arrived at 21:00 local time back home.

Results

As explained, the demand was for CW contacts and that is where my focus was. With a MWL ranking of #27 for EU, I wanted to give priority to those who needed VP8 as an ATNO. With the good propagation, I had a preference to work on the highest possible band. Low band activities can be done by others at the time propagation is dying out on the higher bands and improving for low bands. Although also operated FT8, there was no intention to spend too much time on that mode.

Continent	40	30	20	17	15	12	10	6	All	%	CW	Digital
North America	277	398	378	450	283	369	616	1	2,772	25.6	2,088	684
South America	33	38	56	53	90	77	65	4	416	3.8	308	108
Europe	184	555	343	424	1,187	1,535	1,401		5,629	51.9	3,938	1,691
Africa	2	5	9	7	15	14	13		65	0.6	49	16
Asia	88	633	459	207	223	287	27		1,924	17.7	1,008	916
Oceania	1	2	17	6	6	4	2		38	0.4	9	29
	585	1,631	1,262	1,147	1,804	2,286	2,124	5	10,844	100	7,400	3,444



Thanks

I would like to thank several organizations and individuals for their support; Renato, Carlos, and Stefanie who made my stay at Darwin House unforgettable.

The clubs and foundations that provided financial support; GDXF, CDXC, Clipperton DX Club, KC5WXA, NODXA, DDXG and Ham Radio Land. Further all the individuals that made financial contributions.

Last but not least, my QSL manager Charles MØOXO who again will provide excellent QSL services.

My website to view more details of the VP8G DXpedition and other DXpeditions: www.dx.to

73, Gerben – PG5M

Figure 14 - The wonderful team of Darwin House: Carlos and Stephy, both chef, and Renato, the manager.

Special Edition – 2024 DXCC Year-end Review – by Joe Reisert, W1JR – January 6, 2025

Each year, W1JR, Joe, and W3UR, Bernie, give me permission to reprint this excellent year end summary. We discussed it in depth on The DX Mentor podcast/YouTube. You can check it out there. Thanks to them for permission to reprint.

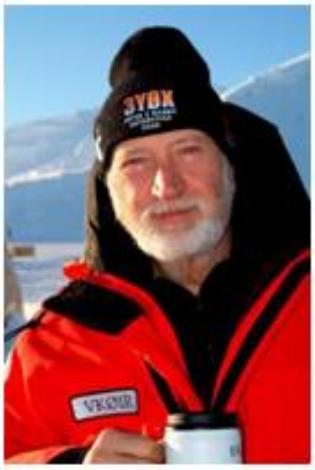
2024 DXCC Year-end Review, by Joe Reisert, W1JR

This year was like a roller coaster driven by increased radio propagation from Solar Cycle (SC) 25. January started with a great solar peak and was followed by a peak every month through October and late December. Even 6 meters saw worldwide openings in late October.

As usual ,several DXpeditions faced transportation and permit problems, increased costs, local RFI problems, etc. Nevertheless, several of them exceeded 100K QSOs. Two of the top 25 Club Log DXCC Most Wanted Countries were activated. WSJT once again was often the dominant mode of communication.

The ARRL was hit by an extensive ransomware attack in May. LOTW (Logbook of the World), DXCC, and many other programs were severely impacted. They are still working hard trying to recover.

Unfortunately, after the death of *CQ Magazine* owner Dick Ross, K2MGA the magazine ceased publication. However, most of their programs have been picked up by individuals, clubs, etc. MFJ owner Martin Jue, K5LFU decided to retire and is ceasing on-site production for MFJ and its sister companies.



K4UEE, Bob Allphin, passed away on February 10, 2024.

Dedication: This Year-end Review is dedicated to the memory of Bob Allphin, K4UEE, who became a Silent Key in February. For many years, Bob participated or led numerous DXpeditions on the Most Wanted DXCC Entities List. He was a great CW op, a member of the DX Hall of Fame, FOC member, A-1 Operator, and more. Bob will surely be missed. May he rest in peace.

2024 in Review: 285 DXCC entities were activated during 2024. Two on the Club Log DXCC Most Wanted List were activated. Single operator FT4GL put Glorioso Island on the air for a month and multi-op N5J activated Jarvis Island. Several DXpeditions made over 100K QSOs, including A8ØK, TX5S (Clipperton Island), N5J, 9L5A, 3D2V, VK9CV, PXØFF, CY9C and T32TTT.

As usual, many DX gatherings and conferences were held, including the International DX Convention in Visalia, CA; HamVention in Xenia, OH; W9DXCC in Chicago and others by many DX clubs. Congratulations to the 2024 CQ Hall of Fame inductees. Contest Hall of Fame: N2IC, PP5JR, and K2MGA, DX Hall of Fame: VE3LYC, W3UR, and K2MGA, and Amateur Radio Hall of Fame: DL8HCZ/(CT1HZE), K3LR, and K2MGA.

Radio Propagation: Needless to say, increased solar flux spiked radio propagation this year. In January the solar flux index hit 195. Even higher peaks followed for the next several months thru October. Later in October many long haul 6 meter contacts took place when the solar flux stayed above 200 for several days. However, the solar flux peaks decreased until the end of December when solar flux finally increased. In October 2023 NOAA predicted that SC 25 may peak between January and October 2024. In October this may have happened. Time will tell.

The weekday propagation column forecasts by Frank Donovan, W3LPL in The Daily DX by W3UR are a great source for current radio propagation. Frank always lists several sites such as SWPC/NOAA for further information. KC2G near-term maps are helpful as is DX.QSL.net/propagation. Recent articles by Frank, W3LPL in October QST and Carl. K9LA in the ARRL Letter on May 30 are also of interest.

Here are some useful propagation guidelines. Propagation is best on 10 and 12 meters when the A index is <15, the K index is <4, the solar wind is <400 KMS and solar flux is >160. A solar flux well over 200 for several days in a row is usually required for good 6 meter F2 propagation.

VK2/W7BRS, Jeff, did a one-man operation from Lord Howe Island in July.

Ham Radio and the Internet: There is no doubt that the internet has had a profound influence on DXing. The DX spotting network on the internet consists of multiple DX Cluster nodes worldwide. Many DX Cluster sites such as DXSummit, DXHeat, VE7CC, RBN (Reverse Beacon Network), PSKReporter, etc. are great resources for timely DX spotting activity and DX information.

When spotting DX on the DX Clusters, make sure to show the exact frequency and mode of operation such as CW, SSB, FT8, or FT8/FH especially when the frequency spotted is not in the expected spectrum. Please don't spot stations that you either aren't hearing or not sure of the call sign. Also, don't ask for skeds or brag about your QSO, etc. Most DXpeditions aren't watching the DX Spotting Network, and many users don't appreciate these interruptions.

Band-by-band Activity in 2024 (Frequencies in MHz):

160 Meters: The rise of SC 25 has adversely affected DX on this band. As a result, there was low to moderate activity, especially on CW, except when DXpeditions are active or during contests when activity fills the band. Increased FT8 activity is between 1.830 and 1.840. Try to avoid using frequencies on 160 meters that are divisible by 5 (e.g., 1.820, 1.825, 1.830 etc.) since broadcast birdies are often present.

75/80 Meters: DX activity has been low to moderate on these bands except during contests and DXpeditions.
CW is mostly on the low end and SSB near 3.795. On the other hand, FT8 activity has really increased around 3.573.

60 Meters: Many new entities have received permission to operate on this band, although they may be limited to 15 watts and a dipole antenna. Well over 250 DXCC entities have been active on 60 meters. Most DX activity is now concentrated around channel 3 at 5.357 and almost entirely on FT8. The FCC is still considering non-channelized operation near channel 3 for USA stations. The ARRL Awards programs do not recognize 60 meter contacts. USA operation on 60 meters is limited to 100 watts output power and a dipole antenna. Use of gain antennas requires reducing transmitter output power.

40 Meters: 40 meters is still the workhorse band during local nighttime. CW and SSB DX activity is especially high during contests. Most DX activity has shifted to the FT8 mode around 7.074. USA stations cannot operate SSB below 7.125, so it is best to stay above 7.128 for safety.

30 Meters: This band is still very popular for DXing, especially for low-power stations. It is usually open a few hours before sunset until after sunrise, but it can remain open most of the day during local winter. There is lots of FT8 activity between 10.130 and 10.140. The USA power limit is still 200 watts at the output of the transmitter.

20 Meters: It is still the go-to DX band especially during local daylight hours, but activity has decreased somewhat as the propagation on the upper bands has improved. Much of the DX activity on CW has decreased except for DXpeditions but SSB activity is still OK. FT8 near 14.073 and FT4 and F/H (Fox/Hound) modes between 14.080 and 14.095 are very active.

17 Meters: This band is often open shortly after 20 meters opens. All modes seem to be doing well. There is lots of FT8 activity around 18.100.

15 meters: With increasing sunspots, 15 meter DX is open during all four seasons and sometimes well into the night. FT8 activity near 21.074 is high, as are the nearby F/H modes.

10 and 12 Meters: Both bands are doing well during the day, Vigilant DXers are sometimes catching DX at least several hours after sunset. Summertime DX propagation is less reliable than during the other months. F2 propagation occurs during most summer days when the solar flux index exceeds 200. Sporadic-E DX propagation frequently occurs during June and July. FT8 activity is high near 24.915 and 28.074.

The CY9C team from St. Paul Island in August/September.

6 Meters and Above: In recent years, most of the DX activity has gone digital on 50.313 and 50.323 during band openings. There is no doubt that the increased sensitivity of FT8 over CW opens this band more often than expected. Also check the ON4KST website for other VHF/UHF traffic. Some F2 propagation is returning with the increase of sunspots during SC 25. TEP (Trans-Equatorial Propagation) and other related propagation associated with the equatorial ionization anomaly are also increasing. EME (Earth-Moon-Earth) DX using digital modes such as WSJT Q65 is becoming very popular on 2 and 6 meters, especially during local moonrise and moonset and during DXpeditions. Over 75 stations contacted ZD9GJ on a recent W7GJ 6 meter EME DXpedition and over 1,000 were also worked on other propagation modes. The top DXers on 6 meters have worked 283 entities but so far officially only about six or so North American stations have achieved the 200 level.

2024 Monthly DX Activity Sample: Here are just some of the medium-rare to rare DX stations that were active during each month.

January: This past January was very productive as solar flux increased with over 210 entities active. Notably rare to semi-rare stations included FW4AT, 3B9AT, T32TT, ET3AA, TX5S (Clipperton 114K QSOs), J52EC, and FH4VVK.

February: As usual, there was lots of activity especially during DX contests. 5X7O, 7O2WX, KH9/NL7RR, CBØZA/ZW (108K QSOs), H4ØWA, and VK9L/GM4DLG were active.

March: Conditions were still great with 4W/JH2EHV, TY5C, HC8MD, and TO5XG (FO/A) active.

April: A52CI, A52P, 3GØYA (142K QSOs), 3D2CCC (117K QSOs), TX7W (FO/A), and VP6G (16K QSOs). May: OJØT, C91CCY, T5/IT9HRE, VU7LAL, ZD7SC (1.3K QSOs), SV2RSG/A, PYØFZ. and FT4GL (61K QSOs).

May: OJØT, C91CCY, T5/IT9HRE, VU7LAL, ZD7SC (1.3K QSOs), SV2RSG/A, PYØFZ. and FT4GL (61K QSOs).

June: C91AHV, 5U5K (40K QSOs), VK9LA (21K QSOs), W8S and K8K (KH8), and S21ZI.

July: K8R (KH8) and FP/KV1J.

August: N5J (107K QSOs), TU/TA7YGT, TO8EP (FP), V73ML, OJØJR, and CY9C (115K QSOs).

September: Z81D, ZD9GJ, XT2AW, T2M, KH8T, and FO/NY1P (FO/A).

October: 3D2V, TI9/TI2JJP, C21MM, C91BV, YJØJJ, and PXØFF (129K QSOs) and ZL7IO.

In December 15 ops from Bangladesh, including 8 youth ops, were QRV as S21DX from IOTA AS-140.

November: VK9CV (108K QSOs), S9Z (52K QSOs), A35GC, 3D2Y (Rotuma), C5T, TL8ES, FJ/W6HGF, AU2K (AS-179 10K QSOs), 9L5A (111K QSOs), 3D2AG/P (Rotuma), and KH7AL/KH9.

December: This is YOTA (Youth on The Air) month with special YOTA call signs everywhere from dozens of entities. Also active were AU2S (AS-153), VU4A (30K QSOs), S21DX, T32TTT (100K QSOs) and of course OF9X (Santa Claus).

Unauthorized Operations: As usual many unlicensed or pirate stations were active during the year. Many expeditions were pirated and spotted before, during, and even after their operation. This explains why many don't release their call signs before commencing operation. Check your QSO using online logs if available. Foul language was sometimes present and is unacceptable.

Some call signs reported on the clusters were probably incorrectly listed. These spots affect many DXers. When spotting a station on the cluster accuracy is extremely important. If you are not sure of a call sign, don't spot it until you are sure it is correct, since it can cause bells to ring worldwide and increase anxiety.

DXpeditions: They are increasing and are the lifeblood to work rare or semi-rare DX entities. They usually face many obstacles since they often go to remote locations. Permission to operate from these locations can sometimes be difficult to obtain and travel can be very costly.

Here is the on-island 3D2Y Rotuma Island DXpedition team. They had many remote youth ops.

This past year was no exception with many delays, interruptions, and cancellations. High winds often damaged antennas. High temperatures above 35 degrees C (95 degrees F), high humidity, as well as critters were sometimes a big problem. Medical issues also occurred. Power outages and local RFI often made it difficult for them in some locations to copy weak signals. Despite these difficulties, at least nine DXPeditions made over 100K QSOs as noted earlier. Several EME expeditions also took place from semi-rare locations.

Support for DXPeditions has never been more important as costs are skyrocketing. While you are operating from the comfort of your shack, they are not always as lucky. Don't complain on the Internet about their operations since you don't know the circumstances. Please support their efforts so they can continue to activate rare entities. NCDXF (Northern California DX Foundation), INDEXA (International DX Association), GDXF (German DX Foundation), and The Yasme Foundation are just a few of the significant supporters of many DXPeditions . These foundations do a great job at vetting and funding upcoming requests.

Operating techniques: Needless to say, the RST report 599 on CW and 59 on SSB are now almost universal! The DX Code of Conduct is a great operating guide. **Deliberate QRM is always forbidden.** The adage still applies, always **Listen, Listen, and Listen** before you start to transmit and do not call on the DX station's frequency!

Don't call stations unless you are copying them or tune up your transmitter on the DX station and the common DX frequencies. Keep tuning time to a minimum and change frequency often. DXPeditions and rare to semi-rare stations almost always operate split frequency. Unfortunately, many stations still call right on top of the DX station or tune up on the same which causes panic.

Finally, don't spot rare DX on the DX Cluster unless you are sure it's legit, know the proper call sign, and surely don't spot rare DX call signs for test purposes. It causes lots of bells to ring worldwide and unnecessary worry. Also don't post rare call signs to thank someone for a QSO or for receiving a QSL etc. Those watching the cluster do not appreciate this type of boasting.

In October/November members of the Mediterraneo DX Club operated XT2MD in Burkina Faso.

Digital Operations: Nowadays digital modes such as WSJT-X (FT8, etc.) are often the dominant DX mode. WSJT-X is managed by K1JT, Joe Taylor, and his development team. It can often decode signals that are barely audible. FT8 sensitivity is up to 10 dB better than CW. The developers of WSJT have recently released updated software. Also, they released the new SuperFox mode (see below) to some stations which makes it possible to work up to nine stations at a time. More updates are expected soon.

3D2AG, Antoine, was QRV as 3D2AG/P from Rotuma in October/November.

FT8 can be a band opener, especially during times of poor propagation. It also allows smaller stations to participate in DXing. The Q65 mode is highly recommended for EME, ionospheric scatter, and other weak signal work in VHF, UHF, and microwave bands.

DXpeditions usually use the F/H (Fox/Hound) mode which requires stations to call at least 1KHz above the DX frequency. Selected stations are now using SuperFox which has no calling frequency requirements. Make sure to call in the proper time sequence and never call if you are not copying the station because if the station should reply, it just slows down the pile-up.

The F/H mode has a learning curve and requires special operating parameters. First off. always call at least 1 KHz above the DX station. Don't call the DX station if you aren't copying them well since if the DX station copies you and calls you it will tie up the report cycle and slow others from a QSO. Make sure that you are transmitting on the proper time slot. Stations are often observed calling in the wrong time slot and right on top of the DX station.

According to Club Log (outside of contests), 50-75% of all DX activity now takes place using WSJT modes. It's interesting to see many well-known DXers now operating FT8. RTTY activity is low but increasing primarily during contests.

DX Contesting: Contests as usual were everywhere this year and lit up the sometimes quiet bands using CW, SSB, and digital modes. There was a noticeable increase of activity on the upper HF bands. The WA7BNM Contest Calendar is a great source of contest information. Also, the **ARRL Contest Update** is a bi-weekly newsletter which often has interesting tidbits on upcoming contests and operating, etc. CTU (Contest University) is also conducted during the year. Remember that contesters should stay healthy so they can operate long hours of continuous activity. A recent article entitled "Healthy Contesting Habits" by KØMD in November QST should be of interest.

The H40WA team was QRV from Temotu Province in February/March.

During the CQ WW DX CW, GU4YOX, Bob, was active as VP2EBB from Anguilla.

ARRL and DXCC Matters: The DXCC program is the largest program at ARRL. As mentioned earlier, ARRL was hit by a huge ransomware attack in May. Many services such as LOTW were literally destroyed. Some have been fixed, but others are still being serviced, causing long processing delays. LOTW has over two billion QSOs on file and is becoming even more popular and widely used instead of paper QSLs.

There are now over 1,845 persons that have qualified for the top of the ARRL DXCC Honor Roll. Over 275 have reached the ARRL DXCC Challenge 3,000 level. To see the latest DXCC standings on the ARRL website first click the "On The Air" window and then DXCC Standings. ARRL also has many bulletins that are of interest to DXers. Some new books were published in addition to updates on existing books. The ARRL QSL bureau is another service for League members.

The DXCC program and rules are now being closely examined for the first time since 2000 by the ARRL Programs and Services Committee. See "Second Century, The Future of DXCC" by NA2AA, David Minster, in November QST. Changes are possible. Send your recommendations to your ARRL DXAC member.

Finally reports in the news media tell us that Bougainville, an autonomous region in Papua New Guinea (P29). has voted to become an independent nation in 2029. If this happens, it might be added to the active DXCC list.

QSLing: Postage and shipping costs have gone sky-high. Many DXPeditions are now requesting US$5 for a QSL. Use of OQRS (Online QSL Request Services) are Increasing. Paper QSLs are becoming a lost art form.

QRZ.com: This is still a great source for information and is very up to date. Locations, distance, bearings, and email addresses are readily available. Sometimes there are also interesting biographies or stories and photos.

Club Log: This is another important source of information for DX. Many DXers and DXpeditions post their logs on Club Log so it is a good place to verify QSO sometimes in a relatively short time. It is also a source for OQRS. Club Log.ORG.DXreport.htm is available on the Internet. They list solar activity, active expeditions, most active modes, etc. This gives you a good overall view of daily DX activity.

Technology: As usual rig improvements such as filtering, noise elimination, direct signal sampling, signal handling, software. etc. are continuing. Some say that AI (Artificial Intelligence) may soon be used to assist noise elimination. Time will tell. Solid state high power amplifiers are increasing. Likewise, antennas, especially smaller sizes, are being developed for people with limited space. Accessories are a necessary part of operating. Nowadays building is often being replaced by buying. Many commercial sources are available. Likewise electronic flea markets and hamfests are often a great source of inexpensive equipment and accessories.

Remote operation is now becoming common practice especially where antenna structures are limited. Gear for same is becoming available. RIB (Radio in a Box) is also being used. Small remote stations can be placed on land, especially where there are environmental concerns or nighttime restrictions. The recent N5J DXpedition used RIBs to make 107K QSOs and operated remotely from a boat and via the internet.

IOTA (Islands on the Air): The IOTA Program celebrated its 60th anniversary during 2024. Improved propagation and a decrease in COVID has increased operations from rare and semi-rare IOTA groups. This year saw two first -time IOTAs activated: 4A5D (NA-144) on Maria Madre Island in late March and AU2K (AS-179) on Kanika Island in late November. Many rare to semi-rare IOTAs were activated, such as AU2S (AS-153), N5J (OC-081), CY9C (NA-094), and TX5C (NA-011). Others had trouble in obtaining entry permits, increased costs ,and travel delays, as well as fuel shortages. The IOTA program now has made some accreditation restrictions when the DX station is working remote such as from a RIB.

N5J from Jarvis Island used the RIB technology, hopefully paving the way for other rare islands.

YOTA (Youngsters on the Air): Throughout the year and especially in December, there were numerous stations some having easily identifiable call signs. They often operated and were supervised by licensed operators, especially on SSB, but also on FT8 and occasionally on CW. These operations are very important for the future of our hobby. Give these stations a call to incentivize the operators to become radio amateurs. Several groups have introduced CW training such as CWops with CW Academy, the Long Island CW Club, and K1USN that transmit slow-speed CW for practice. Several scholarships are also available yearly to youth under 25 years of age such as WROF, NCDXF and W2PV.

TX5S started off the year in January from Clipperton Island.

Safety: This can never be stressed enough. During the past year there was at least one fatal accident, VA2VKG. VE6WZ and others were nearly injured during tower and antenna repairs. We can never be safe enough when working with towers and antennas. See the article by Don Daso, K4ZA, in September QST. Even some professional experts have problems but still may be the correct choice. Proper safety harnesses are required.

Podcasts: These are increasing and sometimes available live or later on the Internet from clubs etc. Examples are The DX Mentor, QSO Today, DX world, AJ8B, W3LPL, K9LA, and others.

Silent Keys (SK): This was a dreadful year for DXers and those supporting amateur radio, although the number of persons on the QST Silent Key list has decreased slightly during this year.

The following is a partial list of SK DXers and others that contributed to our hobby. They are generally listed in the order as they have departed us during this past year: K5YKD, ZL3NB, K6AW, S57DX, K4UEE (see above), HC5T, W2UDT, IZ1GAR, K9IED, HC8JG, NN7D, DJ6TF, W5LE, WA3LPQ, UT5UT, W9YSX, YV5SF, VK4BLK, K2MGA (see above), W8SU, WX4G, WØPAN, W3HC, KC5LK, KB6LQS, N4XM, NQ7R, N6ZM, K3RR, K6GFJ, K5EWJ, W9GT, S21AD, EP2ES, OH5TS, FM5AN, HC5EG, W1FV, K5QE, K3PP, N3AO, N9NR, WB2YQH, K8UT, EK6TA, NE3F, ZL2AO, G3HTA, K9NR, KK9DX, 4S7VG, UT5SI, K4GK, W7DXX, ZA1H, ON4IZ, W4VQ, K8NA, AD6P, W4FLA, OH2BAD, ON4IZ, AB4IQ, K9ZO, NP2B, W6NYW, K2WR, EA5RM, and N2HX.

Finally: Once again, I am honored to be asked by Bernie, W3UR to write this 20th DXCC Year-end Review and for his valuable input and help. Thanks especially go to Frank, W3LPL for his many helpful comments and inputs. Also, to my son Jim, AD1C for his computer help and all the others who helped provide information. I have tried to rearrange and add subjects this year. Suggestions are always appreciated. We hope this review has been informative especially for historical purposes. Most prior DXCC Year-end Reviews can be viewed on the K8CX Ham Gallery. They are listed in the Table of Contents.

Not exactly a DXpedition, but certainly a great photo of his YE9BJM QTH in Bali.

Happy New Year and best wishes for DX during 2025.
73,
Joe Reisert, W1JR

NOTE: Obviously all the opinions etc. expressed are solely mine as are any errors that I have made. This Year- end Review is copyrighted. Therefore, copies or use of this review MUST first be approved by Bernie, W3UR and then a courtesy copy of the reprint must be sent to Joe@Reisert.org.

Special thanks to 3D2AG, AA7JV, GU4YOX, K5GS, KB2FMH, N6PSE, S21RC, WØGJ, W6IZT, W7BRS, and YE9BJM for the photos.

TWIN CITY DX ASSOCIATION (TCDXA)

CLUB FACT SHEET

Who We Are:
The Twin City DX Association (TCDXA) is a 501(c) (3) non-profit amateur radio organization, whose members have an interest in DXing and in supporting the club mission: ***Dollars for DX***. Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation govern the club's operation.

Club Mission:
The club mission supports major DXpeditions with financial donations. The source of operating income for this activity is an annual contribution (dues) of $25 from each member.

DX Donation Policy:
The policy supports major DXpeditions that meet our requirements for financial sponsorship. All requests must be approved by the Board of Directors. Final approval is by vote of the full membership. Over 70 DXpeditions have been sponsored since 1997. Details are available on the website at: http://www.tcdxa.org/sponsoreddxpedtions.html

Club History:
The club was formed in the early 1970s by a small group of DXers from the Twin City area. Over the years, the club has changed; most notably by opening its doors to anyone interested in DXing - from the casual to the very serious operator. Our membership now resides in numerous states and several countries.

Requirements for Membership
We welcome all hams who have an interest in DXing and hold a valid FCC Amateur Radio License. It doesn't matter whether you're a newcomer, or an old-timer to DXing; everyone is welcome!

Meetings:
The club meets on the third Monday of each month (except July & August) at PUB 42 Restaurant in New Hope, MN. Members gather early in the bar for Happy Hour, and move into a private room at 5:00pm for dinner and a short business agenda, 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 officers, plus one additional member make up the Board of Directors; currently: Bert Benjaminson, WBØN, President & Director, *wb0n@yahoo.com* , Vice President & Director, Tom Weigel, AB0J, Secretary/Treasurer & Director, Mark Johns, K0JM, Mike Cizek, WØVTT, Director & DX Grant Manager and Doug Arntson, K0PX, Director.

Website:
We maintain a website at www.TCDXA.org that provides information about a variety of subjects related to the club and DXing, The site is maintained by our webmaster Pat Cain, KØPC.

Newsletter:
The ***Gray Line Report*** is the club newsletter, which is published on a quarterly basis. Past issues are on the website at: http://www.tcdxa.org/newsletter.html.

How to Become a Member:
An application for membership can be completed and submitted online, or printed and mailed in. (See http://www.tcdxa.org/Application.html) Contributions may be made by check or via the PayPal link on the homepage at www.TCDXA.org.

Visit us at a Meeting:
You are most welcome to attend a meeting, and look us over, before joining. Meetings are held at the PUB 42 Restaurant at 7600 Avenue North in New Hope (http://pub42.com/). Join us for happy hour at 4:00pm with dinner at 5:30pm, followed by the meeting at 6:30pm.

VKØIR	K5D	AHØ/NØAT	3W2DK	K4M	XU7MWA
ZL9CI	VK9DWX	5X8C	FT4TA	TX3A	S21EA
A52A	FT5GA	K9W	VK9MT	KMØO/9M6	J2ØRR
T33C	3D2ØCR	XRØZR	VK9DLX	YS4U	J2ØMM
3B9C	E4X	T3ØD	VU4KV	YI9PSE	BS7H
TX9	CYØ/NØTG	3W3O	EP6T	ZL8X	N8S
CP6CW	VP8ORK	3W2DK	VP8STI	4W6A	3B7SP
3YØX	VU4PB	FT4TA	VP8SGI	T32C	3B7C
K7C	STØR	VK9MT	TX3X	HKØNA	5JØA
5A7A	3D2C	VK9DLX	VP6DX	7O6T	K5P
VU4AN	3CØE	VU4KV	TX5C	NH8S	FT4JA
VU7RG	TT8TT	EP6T	9XØR	PTØS	PZ5W
VK9DWX	9M4SLL	3GØZC	9U4U	FT5ZM	ZL9A
S9OK	3DA0RRU	7P8RU	VU4W	CY0S	ZL7/K5WE
TN8K	3B7M	FT8WW	TX5S	VU7W	3Y0J

TCDXA DX DONATION POLICY

The mission of TCDXA is to support DXing and major DXpeditions by providing funding. Annual contributions (dues) from members are the major source of funding.

A funding request from the organizers of a planned DXpedition should be directed to the DX Donation Manager, Mike Cizek, WØVTT. He and the TCDXA Board of Directors will judge how well the DXpedition plans meet key considerations (see below).

If the Board of Directors deems the DXpedition to be worthy of support, a recommended funding amount is presented to the membership for their vote. If approved, the TCDXA Treasurer will process the funding..

Key Considerations for a DXpedition Funding Request

DXpedition destination
Ranking on *Most Wanted Survey*
Most wanted ranking by TCDXA Members
Logistics and transportation costs
Number of operators and their credentials
Number of stations on the air
Bands, modes and duration of operation
Equipment: antennas, radios, amps, etc.
Stateside and/or foreign QSL manager
Website with logos of club sponsors
QSLs with logos of club sponsors
Online logs and pilot stations
Up front cost to each operator
Support by NCDXF & other clubs
LoTW log submissions
Previous operations by same group
Valid license and DXCC approval
Donation address: USA and/or foreign

To join TCDXA, go to http://tcdxa.org/.