

County Hunter News

April 2018

Volume 14 Issue 4

Welcome to the On-Line County Hunter News, a monthly publication for those interested in ham radio county hunting, with an orientation toward CW operation.

Contributions of articles, stories, letters, and pictures to the editor are welcomed, and may be included in future issues at the editor's discretion.

The County Hunter News will provide you with interesting, thought provoking articles, articles of county hunting history, or about county hunters or events, ham radio or electronics history, general ham radio interest, and provide news of upcoming operating events.

We hope you will enjoy the County Hunter News. Feel free to forward, or provide links. Permission is given for copying or quoting in part or all provided credit is given to the CHNews and to the author of article.

CW County Hunter Nets run on 14.0565, 10.122.5, and 7056.5, with activity occasionally on 3556.5 KHz. Also, there is SSB activity now is on 'friendly net' 7188 KHz. The CW folks are now pioneering 17M operation on 18.0915. (21.0565, 24.9155, and 28.0565 when sunspots better). Look around 18136 or for occasional 17M SSB runs usually after the run on 20M SSB. (21.336 and 28.336)

You can see live spots of county hunter activity at ch.W6RK.com

For information on county hunting, check out the following resources:

The USACA award is sponsored by CQ Magazine. Rules and information are here:

<http://countyhunter.com/cq.htm>

For general information FAQ on County Hunting, check out:

<http://countyhunter.com/whatis.htm>

MARAC sponsors an award program for many other county hunting awards. You can

find information on these awards and the rules at:

http://countyhunter.com/marac_information_package.htm

The CW net procedure is written up at:

<http://www.wd3p.net/ch/netproc/netproc.htm>

There is a lot more information at www.countyhunter.com . Please check it out.

Back issues of the County Hunter News are available at www.CHNewsonline.com

Want county lines on your Garmin GPS?

<http://pages.suddenlink.net/w4ydy/hamlinks.html#County>

Download the file to a flash card that fits in your GPS unit, turn it on, and the county lines should appear!

De N4CD, Editor (email: telegraphy@verizon.net)

Notes from the Editor

1) N4CD Rumblings

Winter weather raged across the north part of the country – and the bands didn't cooperate most days with a lack of sunspots and low flux numbers. Still, tens of thousands of contacts were made. When no mobiles were out running, there were Parks on the Air (all in counties) and other things happening to keep things alive. The northeast got whacked by no less than 4 snow storms – that traversed the country inundating Erie PA with record amounts of snow – and many other places. Soon it will be 'spring storm' weather.

The N4CD mobile made a few trips in TX putting out parks and counties. Up to 71,000 miles in a bit over 2 years but the fun continues so far. Others were out on trips – or park activations including WY0A and KA2LHO. Spring has sprung in TX and so have the rains – record rain in Feb, and one week clear, next week mostly rain. Oh well!

We had several great QSO Parties in March- reported on separately – and a noted drop in 20m activity – due to conditions. Even more QP's coming up in April with a half dozen from GA and FL to ND, NE, MS, MO, MI, plus Parks on the Air events in TX and FL. Lots to choose from and participate in !

The ARRL Grid Challenge Continues – but from an 'activator' standpoint it's a big fizzle. No one is chasing mobiles in 'rare grids' – just too many others to work.

2) Michigan Mini – time running out. It's coming up in April after you get your taxes done and paid for for the year – or get money back from Uncle Sam. The work will have been done. Time to celebrate with a mini!

3) Dayton/Xenia hamfest – ticket sales have started. Get your admission ticket now and avoid the last minute rush and extra charge! MARAC will have a booth there. No County Hunter Forum this year.

4) Awards Backlog Fixed – the long backlog has been cleared and all awards should be up to date now.

South Carolina QSO Party

Activity was good with at least 4 mobiles out there giving out contacts – on cw and SSB. The two days – first the SC QP on Saturday, and then the NC QP on Sunday, allowed some of the mobiles to do both in one weekend.

K3TD mobile 562 CW QSO

What was going to be a leisurely start turned out to be a dash to the starting line after the Tarheel Screwdriver couldn't find resonance points. Turned out

Murphy got into the coax jumpers overnight and a temporary power break while connecting the second battery required an anti-theft code to restart the NAV system. Do you remember your anti-theft code? Waking the XYL to pull the file with the card did not make me flavor of the day. So we started 40 minutes late as we crossed the line into MARL and then looped into CHFD before the trek East and South along some of the worst paved roads and loudest line noise in recent memory. Not to mention 20M was not exactly the money band we hoped for and we had ignition noise on 15M making it a nonstarter. It was clear that low power mobile SSB was not going to cut it this time so Tad became full time navigator and driver with Jim being butt in back seat for the duration.

It was amazing how well everyone copied us but we left a lot of callers down in the noise that even the K3s couldn't tame. Apologies to all we just couldn't bring through. Although noise persisted, 40 and 80 came up strong in the afternoon and evening to save the day. Thanks to all the friends following us in our Great South Carolina Road Trip. I thought for sure we'd lose OM2VL when we went to 80M but there he was calling us in every county. FB OM!! Thanks to our friends South of The Border for organizing the first leg of a great weekend. Looking forward to tomorrow and the NCQP.

73,

Tad, K3TD
Jim, K4QPL

W1TEF mobile 204 cw 204 ssb QSO

Had a great time running mobile. Didn't do too bad considering that 20 wasn't working for me at all. 40 saved the day. Not a bad effort considering that I had to be driven instead of driving. With bad eyesight, I really couldn't make the effort that I would have liked while moving down the road. Over all, I'm happy with the results. Nice to have Qs with old and new friends - it was a great time. And I want to thank John Miller, N8EK who was my chauffeur for the entire day.

WA4USN - 167 SSB QSO (ops AB4UG AJ4UQ)

We activated the Charleston ARS club room on the USS Yorktown for a few hours. Started on 40m and ran until things slowed down, then moved to 20m. Moved back

to 40m late and had a mini-pileup going at times.

N6MU - fixed CA - 24 cw QSO

I think the mobiles gave up on 20 after 18Z. Only mobile heard after that was N0C in CHES. 15 was open. Thanks to the three stations that QSYed for me. Only heard one station on 40 when the band finally opened out here. Not much fun from the left coast. 73...

K0AP -fixed - 78 CW QSO

First participation in SCQP and it was a full time effort. Recently I became interested in county hunting so now I try to enter every QP as seriously as I can because this is the easiest, fastest and most inexpensive way to work/confirm counties for the USA-CA and MARAC awards. The mobiles have done an excellent job. Chasing N4CW, N0C, K3TD and W1TEF from multiple counties was a great fun. N4CW is a superb CW operator which has predictable operating pattern and I think I worked him from all counties he was QRV from. Same with N0C although for the last few hours I could not find him on the bands. I hope he did not have any major issues with his mobile station and he will be ready for NCQP tomorrow

40m band was the most reliable although 80m opened nicely couple of hours before the end of the contest. Thank you to all SC stations for the Qso's and I am already looking forward to SCQP 2019.

Mobile Activity in March

At the end of last month: (from W6RK spot history)

KB0BA/N0XYL were running counties in LA, then back up through AR to home.

Peter, N4UP, was busy in GA putting them out

Kraig, KA2LHO, noted in Parks in FL.

K0ATZ was in parks many days during the month. Mostly in MO. Some in OK.

K5ACL spotted in parks in TX

KD0IRW noted in parks in KS

K9JHQ noted in IL Park

N4CD was out on several trips -

WB4KZW, Gene, noted out and about in NC

Bob, N8KIE was on from Honolulu HI

W8TAM spotted in park in TX

Kerri, KB3WAV, and KC3RW spotted in PA, WV Parks

N7AME spotted in Park and IOTA in WA.

Seth, N3MRA noted in NM.

AF5CC noted in counties in OK before OK QP. Ran in OK QP along with county hunter W3DYA. Later headed to TX for a few.

Jim, N9JF, was active in IL and IN counties. Hit a Park or two as well.

Charlie, N2JNE was active in NY – getting a LC for a county hunter.

Kerry, W4SIG, was 'on the air' from Honolulu and Maui

Butch, WY0A took a trip down through AR. LA, MS southeast. Returned a bit later.

Norm, W3DYA headed to LA for the QP.

End date 3/25/2018

- - - - -

Quite a few days saw only one mobile out – activity sure down. Weather 'up north' is slowing down trips, but southern half of country still good weather for trips. Quite a few days, only folks in the Parks on the Air were spotted, and likely then only half of them out there showed up on the spots page.

New Proposed Entry Level License

ARRL has asked the FCC to expand HF privileges for Technician licensees to include limited phone privileges on 75, 40, and 15 meters, plus RTTY and digital mode privileges on 80, 40, 15, and 10 meters. The FCC has not yet invited public comment on the proposals, which stem from recommendations put forth by the ARRL Board of Directors' Entry-Level License Committee, which explored various initiatives and gauged member opinions in 2016 and 2017.

"This action will enhance the available license operating privileges in what has become the principal entry-level license class in the Amateur Service," ARRL said in its Petition. "It will attract more newcomers to Amateur Radio, it will result in increased retention of licensees who hold Technician Class licenses, and it will provide an improved incentive for entry-level licensees to increase technical self-training and pursue higher license class achievement and development of communications skills."

Specifically, ARRL proposes to provide Technician licensees, present and future, with phone privileges at 3.900 to 4.000 MHz, 7.225 to 7.300 MHz, and 21.350 to 21.450 MHz, plus RTTY and digital privileges in current Technician allocations on 80, 40, 15, and 10 meters. The ARRL petition points out the explosion in popularity of various digital modes over the past 2 decades. Under the ARRL plan, the maximum HF power level for Technician operators would remain at 200 W PEP. The few remaining Novice licensees would gain no new privileges under the League's proposal.

ARRL said its proposal is critical to developing improved operating skills, increasing emergency communication participation, improving technical self-training, and boosting overall growth in the Amateur Service, which has remained nearly inert at about 1% per year.

ARRL's petition points to the need for compelling incentives not only to become a radio amateur in the first place, but then to upgrade and further develop skills. Demographic

and technological changes call for a "periodic rebalancing" between those two objectives, the League maintains.

"There has not been such a rebalancing in many years," ARRL said in its petition. "It is time to do that now." The FCC has not assessed entry-level operating privileges since 2005.

The Entry-Level License Committee offered very specific data- and survey-supported findings about growth in Amateur Radio and its place in the advanced technological demographic that includes individuals younger than 30. It received significant input from ARRL members via more than 8,000 survey responses.

"The Committee's analysis noted that today, Amateur Radio exists among many more modes of communication than it did half a century ago, or even 20 years ago," ARRL said in its petition.

Overall net growth in the Amateur Service has remained sluggish at about 1% per year over the past few years.

Now numbering some 378,000, Technician licensees comprise more than one-half of the US Amateur Radio population. ARRL said that after 17 years' experience with the current Technician license as the gateway to Amateur Radio, it's urgent to make it more attractive to newcomers, in part to improve upon science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education "that inescapably accompanies a healthy, growing Amateur Radio Service," ARRL asserted.

ARRL said its proposal is critical to developing improved operating skills, increasing emergency communication participation, improving technical self-training, and boosting overall growth in the Amateur Service, which has remained nearly inert at about 1% per year.

The Entry-Level License Committee determined that the current Technician class question pool already covers far more material than necessary for an entry-level exam to validate expanded privileges. ARRL told the FCC that it would continue to refine examination preparation and training materials aimed at STEM topics, increase outreach and recruitment, work with Amateur Radio clubs, and encourage educational institutions to utilize Amateur Radio in STEM and other experiential learning programs. "ARRL requests that the Commission become a partner in this effort to promote Amateur Radio as a public benefit by making the very nominal changes proposed herein in the Technician Class license operating privileges," the petition concluded.

- - -

from the later ARRL Newsletter

Some in the Amateur Radio community have questioned the need for expanded Technician privileges or to express other perspectives. ARRL has responded to point out some of the key advantages of its petition, which recognizes the tremendous technological advances and changes in Amateur Radio. Some key points:

- A thorough review of operating privileges available to the entry-level license has not taken place since the late 1970s, when the Novice-class license -- the entry-level license at that time, and no longer issued -- was modified to allow Novices access to a limited portion of 10 meters. This included the first HF phone privileges for Novices.
- The 2-year process that led to the development of ARRL's petition includes significant input from the Amateur Radio community. The two surveys that the ARRL board's Entry-Level License (ELL) Committee conducted on this issue drew more than 8,000 responses from ARRL members.
- The 378,000 Technician licensees comprise more than half of the US Amateur Radio population, yet the Technician-class license no longer serves its original purpose from 18 years ago. Many Technicians do not participate actively, pursue on-air and public service opportunities, renew their licenses, or upgrade. An uncomfortably large attrition rate exists among Technician licensees. Technician licenses are not upgrading, because they don't find their operating privileges interesting enough to keep them in the hobby.
- The proposed addition of 275 kilohertz of HF phone privileges, spread across 80, 40, and 15 meters, would allow Technicians the opportunity to develop and expand their understanding of HF propagation. In addition, this proposed change would allow Technician licensees to participate in public service-oriented, emergency, and Section traffic nets on 75 meters, from 3900 to 4000 kHz, where primary state/Section-wide public service activities often take place.
- Additional operating privileges for Technicians will not limit their incentive to upgrade. ARRL points out that Technicians now have access to 850 kilohertz of spectrum in four HF bands. ARRL proposes an additional 275 kilohertz on three of those bands, so the total under this proposal is 1,125 kilohertz on four bands -- 80, 40, 15, and 10 meters.

Compare that to current General-class HF privileges: 3150 kilohertz across nine HF bands -- 160, 80, 40, 30, 20, 17, 15, 12, and 10 meters. In addition, Generals have access to the five 60-meter channels and to the two newest bands, 2200 and 630 meters. The incentive to upgrade from Technician to General is a tripling of the available HF spectrum; upgrading to General allows access to eight additional bands, including the prime daytime bands of 20 and 17 meters. Also, Technicians upgrading to General or higher are permitted the maximum amateur power level of 1500 W PEP.

, Demographic and technological changes call for a “periodic rebalancing,” and there has not been such a rebalancing in many years. The FCC has not assessed entry-level operating privileges since 2005, and yet Amateur Radio has changed dramatically since then, with many more modes of communication having been developed

- ARRL does not propose changes to the Technician class question pool, which is reviewed and updated every 4 years by the NCVEC’s Question Pool Committee. The current pool already tests for all of the basic technical and operating information that would allow Technician-class licensees to safely and appropriately use the proposed additional spectrum.

--

All above courtesy ARRL Weekly Newsletter.

Comment de N4CD – with the current sunspot level and cycle, 10M privileges are essentially useless except for a few brief openings on E-skip each year. Makes sense to give them some spectrum where they can communicate.

North Carolina QSO Party

K3TD mobile 757 cw QSO

Coming off the great SC QSO Party on Saturday we didn't know if we'd be able to

keep riding for another 10+ hours in NC. But a good night in a hotel near Charlotte and a good breakfast before heading up I-77 to be in Iredell County (To get our "I" for Carolina and hopefully to have a pileup giving them out) got us in the mood to do it again.

Other than a USB port in the laptop finally giving up from rough roads (We had taped it in SC)and having to make a quick port install in another port, Murphy left us alone.

20 was again a disappointment. During the EU opening we worked a few DX and later some west coasties, but there really wasn't much point in spending time there when 40 was acting like 20 for most of the day.

This weekend were the first mobile contests where we had great telnet from beginning to end with Tad's wi-fi hotspot feeding my laptop. (Wait until his company sees the data minutes!! Fortunately he's with a communications company) Was great to see all the spots coming in and to see all the active counties and where the other mobiles were. As with most contests the rate boost was immediate when we were spotted. Thanks for all manual spots giving out county activations.

As in SC, activity and rate started slower and picked up as the afternoon and evening came and 80M came into its own again. Again it was hard to believe how well we seemed to be getting out both DX and east of the Rockies. I just wish there was some way to match up receiving quality. Tad nixed the idea of dragging a 200' B.O.G. (Beverage On Ground)behind the SUV! We get enough strange looks with the hulking 160-10M Tarheel Screwdriver in the trailer hitch.

We activated 18 counties with extra time for Columbus County to give as many opportunities for bonus points. The rest of the time we were trying to manage our time in each county to match the pileups, trying to rush through the big counties but also occasionally stopping short of a county line until the pileup diminished. Unfortunately we couldn't do anything about time running out for the contest in NASH county and we still had a pileup when the clock hit 0100Z. The pileup was huge and by that time my concentration was waning from 10 hours in the chair stoked by trail mix, Gatorade and whatever other junk food Tad would throw back into my cage!

As with South Carolina we put all of our energies into CW as SSB is not very productive in comparison. Tad did another great job of navigating and meeting

our target of ending the contest just before reaching well-served WAKE county. In fact, we left NASH and rolled into WAKE just two minutes after the contest ended.

Finally, congratulations to Marty and all the great organizing group for a well planned, publicized and managed QSO Party. Thanks to everyone in NC for supporting it so well and activating so many counties with special thanks for all the bonus stations.

And most of all, thanks to our wonderful North American and DX friends who followed us around North Carolina and gave us those exciting pileups. We hope you enjoyed the party as much as we enjoyed throwing it.

See you next year!
73,

Tad, K3TD
Jim, K4QPL

N4CW mobile - 887 cw 20 SSB

After a really busy Saturday in the SCQP (26 counties activated), Jim (W4TMO) and I started off on a rainy morning, and all day it was on and off rain. Jim drove and I operated. Great DX on 20 early Sunday; worked as far east as Russia and west to BC with lots in-between. We worked OM2VL on CW and SSB as often as conditions permitted; Laci always had a fine signal.

It was an amazing and fun adventure, always wondering if K1GQ would be the first Q after crossing a county line or changing bands...several others, including K1RO and WA1Z would be there also. Needless to say, I loved the following and a great appreciation to all the patient stations who only gave their calls once! Whittling down the pileups eventually got everybody interested in a Q from us.

If I was slow to respond, that may have been due to the "snaking" through the mountain roads in Western NC...it was not only an adventure, it was a challenge not to hit extra keys and keeping the paddle from sliding off the plywood board I was using as a "desk". Other hazards that slowed us down were bumpy roads, especially one gravel road that had a narrow wooden bridge (one lane!) near Boone. Jim was navigating with his cell phone, and it had a habit

of choosing the shortest distance between points; that's not always advisable because you go on some interesting excursions!

Murphy only showed his face a couple times and we weren't delayed much...mostly with not being familiar with the logger, "CQX".

Jim really did a great job mapping out our route, plugging the county line coordinates into his cell phone, then following orders from the GPS app. We want to thank Marty and the NCQP coordinators for their excellent work. We were able to provide "CAROLINA" using both SC and NC counties and hope many avail themselves to the raffle for doing so (see the rules).

This year our mobile station consisted of a K3 and two Outback antennas (an "Outreach" on the trailer hitch mount and a mag-mounted "Perth" on top of the RAV-4). Power was by two 45 AH AGM batteries in parallel with a battery charger helping to keep them "alive"); I have yet to hook to the SUV's internal battery...some day...

Thanks, all y'all, for a real fun time.

Bert (N4CW) and Jim (W4TMO)

K0AP -fixed - 104 cw - 53 counties worked

Lots of NC stations and the mobiles in particular have done an excellent job. N4CW is a fantastic operator, deserves full well that "CW" in the suffix. N0C, K3TD and K5CM had great runs as well. K5CM was a great surprise since his activity was not announced on the NCQP web site. Great to hear/work my buddy Vlado N3CZ from Buncombe, NC. It was a fun weekend and I am looking forward to NCQP 2019. Thanks for all Qso's.

WB2ABD - fixed - NY - 95 counties worked

Stinky conditions up here. 40 improved towards suppertime and 80 wasn't too noisy. Called the 2 stations I heard on 20 but they didn't hear me. Worked a couple of bonus stations. Got a handful of 80m counties.

K8MR - fixed - 48 cw - 34 counties

Very weak signals (on 40) until late afternoon; if the mobiles were there, I couldn't hear them through my local noise. Once they became audible, K3TD and N4CW were doing a great job. Good to have K5CM in there as well.

WN4APF - fixed - SC 134 cw 14 SSB

I want to thank everyone who came to the SCQP this year. Band conditions weren't the greatest, but we still had a good time. Special SCQP thanks to all of the mobile ops and bonus station ops that kept the activity going. See y'all next year for the Carolina Weekend.... who knows what on-air fun we are going to dream-up for the next one.

73s Dave WN4APF

On the Road with N4CD I

The urge to travel hit again. Many parks in south TX were just calling my name – come and visit. OK - time for a park and county putting out trip for a week to two weeks – to south TX down to the Rio Grande River, then west. Lots of good not very often run counties would be along the way.

Sunday – March 4

Saturday it was raining all day so I left on a Sunday – beat all the usual 'rush hour' traffic by doing it on a weekend and zipped on down US75 to I-35 headed to the Austin TX area – Travis County to get to the first park down that way. Four hour drive. The ARRL DX SSB contest was raging. 20M SSB was going to be a problem on Sunday. First up was Balcones NWR – Park KFF-0543. There are a half dozen 'parts' to this to the NW of Austin. I headed to one that was easy to find right off the main road – and zipped on in for a good run of 47Qs.



From Wiki:

“Balcones Canyonlands is a national wildlife refuge located in the Texas Hill Country to the northwest of Austin. The refuge was formed in 1992 to conserve habitat for two endangered songbirds including the golden-cheeked warbler and the black-capped vireo and to preserve Texas Hill Country habitat for numerous other wildlife species.

The refuge is located within a deeply dissected portion of the Edwards Plateau that contains many steep-banked streams and canyons. Beneath the surface of the Edwards Plateau lies an underground labyrinth of caves, sinkholes and springs. Even deeper below the surface lies the Edwards Aquifer, which stores billions of gallons of water and supplies drinking water for almost one million people. The aquifer is also the source of many springs that feed Hill Country rivers, which eventually flow into the marshes, estuaries, and bays along the Texas coast.”

Time for more! Off to Blanco State Park – in Blanco County naturally. Pulled in at 1925Z – and wound up with enough in 90 minutes to call it 'success'. Worked an XR0YD DX-pedition station on Easter Island while there on 17m. Caught XE1RK and HC5AI as well on 20m for some DX! If they are on LoTW, maybe someday I'll get to 100 countries worked from the mobile. As of now, that's not a priority. This is a fairly small park along the Blanco River – just 100 acres – but very popular in warm weather-actually mobbed – they have to limit how many get in during the summer months. It's only an hour away from Austin and San Antonio.



Time to head on into the city of Blanco a mile away and the Swiss Lodge Motel for the night. This is an older but well maintained property. Rated fine on TripAdvisor. No Wyndham properties(Super 8, Days Inn, etc) are there. Dinner at a nearby Mexican restaurant. Slept well.

Monday 3/5 2018

Up early – no breakfast at the motel so hit the nearby service station/food emporium – with a nice bacon, cheese and egg biscuit and coffee. Then it was off to Guadalupe River State Park not far away – KFF-3017 – in Comal County. Some of these parks are in two or more counties so you have to keep track of where you are – a good map usually helps. I have a large 100 page Map of TX Atlas that does a nice job. At least a dozen states have their own map books with fine detail. Often parts of parks are not accessible by car – for the other counties listed in a multiple county park. Sometimes the information on the web is also wrong. I use this link for my planning:

<http://countyhunter.com/Toplist/KFF-County.htm>

Once or twice it's been wrong on a location, but it's 99% there.

This park is 3 square miles along 4 miles of river. Lots of campsites, hiking trails, and nature. Pulled in – did my radio bit with 75Qs – and headed to the next down by Austin.

Next up today was Government Canyon State Natural Area (SNA). It's a 19 square mile area with 23 walk in camp sites. Normally it's only open on Fri-Mon for day use. There are 40 miles of hiking trails in the SNA. Pulled in, and whipped off 70Q. Not much happening on 20M SSB these days – just a handful of contacts. It was still early in the day – 20M opens late to the majority of the US. In the morning, you can work some European DX on 20cw.



Now it was over to Palmetto State Park in Gonzales County.



I started on 20 cw spotting only on the CH frequency and W6RK, with a few showing up, then went to 17m cw for a dozen contacts. Back to 20m CW with spots on DX-summit and the WWFF-KFF Facebook page and 20 folks showed up. Hit 20M SSB for 17Q, then added in 5 on 30M CW, and 4 on 40M CW. The park was constructed by

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) between 1934 and 1937. The CCC built Park Road 11, a low water crossing on the San Marcos River, a water tower/storage building, refectory, and residence (currently the park headquarters), barbecue pits, picnic seating, rock pool and retention dams, rock table, culverts, concrete picnic tables, and two sets of entrance portals. It's 270 acres – you can rent paddle boats and kayaks there.

Still time today so I'll hit one more – Lockhart State Park KFF-3033 in Caldwell County. Grid EL19. This is another park built by the CCC boys back in the 1930s. They constructed the road in, trails with bridges over streams, several large buildings and an observation tower. There's camping and hiking. 270 acres – and not far from Austin so it's mobbed in the summer time. Glad I'm doing this when the weather is, well, rainy and chilly. No crowds to fight. Hi hi. I'd just take 'chilly' but the rain seems to be everywhere in the east half of TX and it will continue on my trip for a few more days. Put 103Qs in the log – lots of contacts on 20m SSB for a change.

Before the sun set, I hotfooted it over to San Marcos (on I-35) – a 25 mile back-track detour to find a motel. Not much in Lockhart the town- other than not-so-great rated places on TripAdvisor. Super 8 Motel. Dinner at Chuy's Mexican restaurant nearby. Filled up on a large platter of Fajita chicken with lots of grilled onions and Bell peppers. Too many – the digestive system complained for days. Slept well.

Tuesday 3/6

Woke up to 60F and total cloud cover. The clouds would stick around for days – no sun. I was headed to Goliad State Park KFF-3015 in Grid EL18. Goliad County. Had to get back to where I was the previous evening, then head further south.



From Wiki:

Goliad State Park and Historic Site is a 188.3 acres state park located along the San Antonio River on the southern edge of Goliad, Texas. In addition to recreational facilities the park property includes three historic sites - Mission Nuestra Señora del Espíritu Santo de Zúñiga, Mission Nuestra Señora del Rosario and the birthplace of Ignacio Zaragoza.

Mission Nuestra Señora del Espíritu Santo de Zúñiga, also known as Aranama Mission or Mission La Bahia, was a Roman Catholic mission established by Spain in 1722 in the Viceroyalty of New Spain—to convert native Karankawa Indians to Christianity. Together with its nearby military fortress, Presidio La Bahia, the mission upheld Spanish territorial claims in the New World against encroachment from France. The third and final location near Goliad, Texas is maintained now as part of Goliad State Park and Historic Site.

Ignacio Zaragoza Seguín- (March 24, 1829 – September 8, 1862) was a Mexican general and politician. He led the Mexican army that defeated invading French forces at the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862 (now celebrated in both the United States and Mexico as Cinco de Mayo)”

This park was set in motion in the 1930s. The CCC folks rebuilt the mission and the rest of the 180 acre park. Now there's camping and hiking, plus touring the mission. It was raining (downpour) while I was there so I skipped the touristy thing. Put 60Q in the log

then headed out to the next.

It seems back in the 1930s, town fathers all over the USA recruited the WPA (Works Progress Administration) to build parks all over the country using the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). If the town could come up with the land which could be easily acquired or was readily available – they'd get a nice park, they'd get a boost to the local economy with several hundred workers being there for a few years building things, buying things, and helping the local economies. Many of the state parks in TX were done this way, as were many in OK. I suspect there were many others around the country (Hundreds) built in the 1930s by the CCC. They were also active in building long trails like the Appalachian and North Country – plus many of the facilities along them – scenic overlooks and lodges on mountain tops.

Next up is Choke Canyon State Park in Live Oak County – getting south now – Grid EL08. KFF- 2997. It lies on a large reservoir. It's a nice oasis in otherwise dry south TX. Camping, boating, the usual stuff. This is a 'new' park having been created in 1981. Part lies in Live Oak, part in McMullen County. The reservoir is one of several that supplies water to Corpus Christi.



Next on the agenda is Lake Corpus Christi in San Patricio County. I'm still headed southerly. This is, well no surprise, another CCC built park with lots of work completed and still there – buildings, lookout tower, campsites, 25 bridges across streams.....Pulled in, did my radio bit, and left with a decent amount of QSOs. If my luck held, I could run one more today.

Off to Fort Lipantitlan. I never heard of it. You have to look hard to find out much about it, but it is a state Historic Site – KFF-3506 in Nueces County. It's not in my Garmin GPS – but using Google Maps on my Android spotting tablet, I navigated my way there. There are NO road signs to get you there and no street address. Turns out it had significant presence in the battle for an independent TX – and kicking Mexico out of

what is now US territory.

From the web:

State Site: “Lipantitlan State Historic Site is 5 acres east of Orange Grove in Nueces County. The property was deeded by a private owner in 1937 and transferred by Legislative Act in 1949 to the State Parks Board from the Board of Control. It was opened in 1949.

Near this area, a wooden picket fort was constructed around 1831 by Mexican forces in anticipation of trouble with Anglo immigrants. The fort apparently was named for a camp of Lipan Apaches in the vicinity. In 1835, the small guard force that held the fort surrendered it to Texan forces without a shot being fired.

In 1842, a battalion of Texas volunteers camped in this area. In an attempt to lay claim to the territory between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande, the camp was seized by Mexican general Antonio Canales, but the Mexican forces later retreated. Around 10 years later, during the Mexican War, troops under General Zachary Taylor passed through this area on their way to the Rio Grande.

Facilities: A historical marker commemorates this site. No other facilities are at this site.”

- - -

They weren't kidding. You arrive and you see the marker. There's an old water cistern – probably added a lot later. That's it – other than a bunch of trees. Nothing else to see. No signs saying 'here was'. Nothing. Not even a Porta-John.

However, it's a 'radio site' so I did my runs. This is all you see there – the marker!

You'll recall Zachary Taylor went on to become President of the US.



Ft Lipantitlan Marker

- ----

A bit more history:

from Wiki:

“Occupied in 1831 by soldiers of the Mexican army to prevent further anglo-american colonization in Texas. Captured Nov, 4 1835 by volunteers under Captain Ira Westover. Unsuccessfully attacked June 7, 1842 by 700 men under General Antonio Canales while defended by 192 men under General James Davis. Five acres of land surrounding the site of the fort was generously donated to the state of Texas by the heirs of J.C. Bluntzer in 1937.

The Battle of Lipantitlán was fought along the Nueces River on November 4, 1835 between the Mexican Army and Texian insurgents, as part of the Texas Revolution. After the Texian victory at the Battle of Goliad, only two Mexican garrisons remained in Texas, Fort Lipantitlán near San Patricio and the Alamo Mission at San Antonio. Fearing that Lipantitlán could be used as a base for the Mexican army to retake Goliad and angry that two of his men were imprisoned there, Texian commander Philip Dimmitt ordered his adjutant, Captain Ira Westover, to capture the fort.

The commander of Fort Lipantitlán, Nicolás Rodríguez, had been ordered to harass the Texian troops at Goliad. Rodríguez took the bulk of his men on an expedition; while they were gone, Westover's force arrived in San Patricio. On November 3, a local man persuaded the Mexican garrison to surrender, and the following day the Texians dismantled the fort. Rodríguez returned as the Texians were crossing the swollen Nueces River to return to Goliad. The Mexican soldiers attacked, but the longer range of the Texians rifles soon forced them to retreat. One Texian was injured, 3–5 Mexican soldiers were killed, and 14–17 were wounded.

The injured Mexican troops were allowed to seek medical treatment in San Patricio, and the remaining Mexican soldiers retreated to Matamoros. The Texians now had full control of the Texas Gulf Coast, which meant that the troops stationed at San Antonio de Béxar could only receive reinforcements and supplies overland. Historian Bill Groneman believes that this contributed to the eventual Mexican defeat at the siege of Béxar, which expelled all Mexican troops from Texas. The former site of the fort is now a Texas historic site.”

- - - - -

Well, there you have it. The Texians dismantled the wood picket fort 180 years ago – so all you have is the ground where 'somewhere near' a fort stood. OK.....works for me – it was a fairly quiet location and even though late in the day, managed to get just enough QSOs for a successful activation. Now I know about Ft Lipantitlan, too. Who knows ? Might be a clue on Jeopardy! -one of these days.

I headed into the town of Mathis along the Interstate nearby at a La Quinta motel. \$90 with tax. Not too many choices in this neck of the woods. Dinner at Smolek's BBQ – decent.

Time for a break.....continued later.....

Book Review of the Month

This month's book is a fairly recent ham radio fiction book from 1992 – the Fox Hunt Adventure by Dave Custer, KE0OG. In the beginning, Ben, a teenager in Louisville,

CO, is busy doing homework to get done so he has some spare time to fire up the ham rig and work some local friends. He and his mom have a discussion about the local school drug problem. Seems like low cost drugs are flooding the town in massive amounts and the police and school officials are desperate to shut it down. Ben comments you can't copy Morse code when high so his mom doesn't have to worry about him.

He works part time at a pizza/sub shop not far away. Not long after, he's listening on the 2m radio and hears a friend calling for help. Seems one of the hikers has fallen and had a compound fracture of the ankle. Has to be medivac'ed out of the mountains to the Arapahoe Hospital ten miles away.. He relays the message to the sheriffs department and then hops on his mountain bike to head on over to the hospital. (Ham radio plays a big part in this book). Just one of the different adventures in the story

Afterwards the group of his friends is discussing things and one of the girls asks if his radio setup can receive foreign broadcasts so she can practice her German. Naturally, Ben says yes – but some local QRM has been wiping him out lately – an extremely loud signal – that must be close – but no hams live nearby. He and Cindy record an hour of the Deutsche Welle – the German overseas service – but the QRM has started but not affected them on 9.7 MHz. Ben tunes the radio up to the QRM frequency and it's on 13.9 MHz, just below the 20m band. He tunes it in using his RTTY copy program and it's all six letter code groups.

Luckily, his dad works in the aerospace industry, and with a little bit of detective work, they figure out these messages are using a digital encryption scheme known as PRUFE. Ben mentions this to the local police department, and learns that Code PRUFE uses the DES algorithm, and without the 'key word' is nearly impossible to break, even for the government and super computers. What is strange about the transmissions, that randomly occur, is there is no identification, and it's outside of any known business or amateur bands. It's a pirate. Some speculate it may be part of the Louisville drug epidemic.

Ben decided to go hunting on his bike for the mysterious station – which would likely require some sort of outside antenna. After several bike rides in various locations, just outside the town limits, he spies a strange mostly vertical antenna sitting by an old isolated house. There is no car in the driveway so he takes a look into the window. Inside is someone removing plastic wrapped packages from boxes and inventorying them. Now he realizes it's time to get out of there, but as he turns, he is confronted by another man with a revolver pointed right at him. Ben is now a prisoner of the drug dealers – long term career ruthless criminals Bull and Cyrus.

With Ben missing, his friends started looking for him – and his bicycle. One, Toby, discovers him, but he too is captured and taken prisoner.

The bad guys – Bull and Cyrus – have decided before to move the operation. The Louisville operation is up and running and it's time to add additional cities to the drug distribution network. Now they need to dispose of the two prisoners and come up with a scheme to do so. Ben and Toby, both thoroughly tied up, are taken into the main part of the house where the computer and radio are set up. The bad guys send a final message before leaving – and Ben sees the code word on the monitor for the PRUFE code. A lot of good that does him now! The bad guys load all their equipment into a van and head out into the mountains to dispose of the two prisoners.

Ben notices his fanny backpack has been thrown in the van nearby. He manages to get to his 2m handheld and send SOS followed by 15 seconds, hoping someone is listening and will 'fox hunt' the signal. His friends do here it but it takes a while to mobilize, alert the police and go after the bad guys. Toby is tossed, bound, into a freezing river. Just before the bad guys are getting out Ben to do the same, the police home in and stop the crooks cold. Luckily Ben and the police manage to get out Toby a half mile downstream before he drowns. A false message is sent to the home location of the mother station for the drug dealers, using the code word Ben had seen, is used as a lure, and the feds home in and shut down the entire drug operation. All ends well.

Lots of adventure, lots of ham radio.....

--

The book is a decent read – especially for newcomers since there is lots of explanation of ham radio, the techniques used, the hows and where of having QSOs, fox hunting, etc. 136 pages. Written in 1992.

Book available from MFJ and Ham Radio Outlet stores for under \$10.

Grid Chase Update

From the ARRL Newsletter:

Our second month of the 2018 ARRL International Grid Chase (IGC) is now in the

books. Big numbers continue on the bands, with overall reporting up by more than 5% from January. While WARC and VHF+ band activity dipped a bit, activity was up on the other HF bands. As evidenced by how many amateurs participated in February, per the leader board, the month saw 22,121 participants (logbook accounts = station locations). March is off and running with more than 14,600 logbook accounts -- through March 12 at 1200 UTC. Months start out strong because the leaderboard resets, allowing repeat contacts.

Last month, we reported that low sunspots and low winter E-skip and F2 motivated lower band participation. As spring takes hold, E-skip will bring up the MUF for upper HF (and VHF) bands, and tropospheric openings will fuel VHF-to-microwave openings as well.

Activity in late February and early March also benefitted from the ARRL International DX Contest CW and phone weekends.

ARRL's social media feeds have been humming with lots of IGC chatter. A couple group activities that caught our attention included posts by Bob Lindsay, W8MRL, who is tracking the IGC activities of Ohio hams, and by Paul Gacek, W6PNG, and the TI/WJ1B team who mounted a DXpedition to Costa Rica (EK70) for the couple of weeks around the time of the ARRL DX Phone weekend. In addition to Gacek, the team included Buddipole CEO/Owner Chris Drummond, W6HFP; ARRL Dakota Division Director Matt Holden, K0BBC, and retired ARRL COO Harold Kramer, WJ1B.

Complete Grid Chase information is always available on the ARRL website. Also visit the IGC 2018 Facebook page.

ARRL 2018 International Grid Chase gear now is available from the ARRL Store. You can buy IGC t-shirts, coffee mugs, pins, and stickers, as well as an IGC North America map, grid square map, and grid square atlas. -- Thanks to ARRL Contest Branch Manager Bart Jahnke, W9JJ

- - -

courtesy ARRL Newsletter

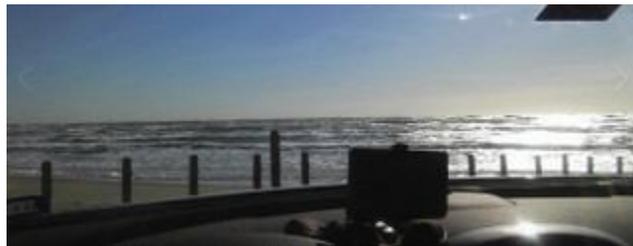
On the Road with N4CD Part II

Wednesday March 7

Today I'd head toward the Gulf Coast and the city of Corpus Christi. I left the motel real early hoping to get to the state park during the weekly Wednesday CW Test that runs from 1300-1400z in the morning – then again after lunch at 1900Z for an hour. I had an hour drive – through downtown Corpus Christi - but not much traffic at that hour! Zipped over to the park – Mustang Island - KFF-3043 in the system. Arrive at 7:20am. Fortunately the entrance station is set back and well 'in the park' since the rest of the park doesn't open till 8am. But no sweat, I'm in the park, so I get on the air in the CWT and whip off 45Q in 40 minutes.

Then when the entrance station opens – I go through – show my state pass – and head toward the beach. This area was devastated by Hurricane Harvey – as were many of the state parks which are still recovering from the damage. The only thing open was the 'day use' area along the beach. Fine with me. I pull up 30 feet from the water and operate. It's cool – temp in the 60 deg area with a strong wind – but the sun is bright and warm. The location seems to work well. Whoo-hoo! 132Q go in the log including 20 DX stations in EU.

I enjoy the view out the window and the sea breeze. You can't find too many operating spots better than this for a view, with the waves crashing on the shore just in front of the car.



Gulf of Mexico out front car window
Very scenic location!
Car pointed Northeast

Time now to head south – it's a couple hours down to the next one – and I run the counties along the way – including Kleberg and Kenedy – not much there in Kenedy but 60 miles of interstate. Through Willacy.

Way down in Cameron County you find the large Laguna Atacosa NWR. Be sure to print off instructions on how to get there – if you are planning to visit. Hurricane Harvey wiped out several roads and you need to follow the web detouring directions to get there. The GPS lady will take you to a dead ended road short of the NWR. Found it fine using the web directions.

From the web:

“The south Texas landscape is a unique blending of temperate, subtropical, coastal, and desert habitats. Mexican plants and wildlife are at the northernmost edge of their range, while migrating waterfowl and sandhill cranes fly down for the mild winters. This combination makes Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge world famous for its birds, and home to a mix of wildlife found nowhere else.

Laguna Atascosa NWR is the largest protected area of natural habitat left in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, an oasis for wildlife with few alternatives. The refuge's 45,000 acres become more valuable with each acre lost to development--valuable to wildlife and valuable to those who enjoy wildlife in wildlands.

When the Spanish explorer Alonzo Alvarez de Pineda arrived in the Rio Grande Valley in 1519 he found a landscape very different from what we see today. The area was abundant with wildlife, and 3 million acres of coastal prairies and brushlands covered the landscape. Doves darkened the sky, deer grew fat on grasslands, and ducks filled the bays near the coast. “

Now, there's 3 million people – and of course, gigantic development along the coast and along the entire Rio Grande Valley with major sprawling cities.

I pull in – find a parking spot – and enjoy the view as I put out Cameron County and the park – KFF -0549. The bands are cooperating – and it's also mid-day CWT time – so 101Qs go into the log.



Now on to the last for the day. Still in Cameron County and getting later in the day. 20M often dies not much after 3pm in TX – skip gets long – you hear the coasts and that's about it.

On the way to the motel, I pass by the Port Isabella Lighthouse. You can't miss it – it's 100 feet off the main road on 'the highway' to South Padre Island. 80 feet tall. Built in 1852, it's seen a lot of history. This is the only Texas lighthouse open to the public! 16 lighthouses were built along the Texas coast in this time period. Nearly all the others are gone – dismantled.



During the civil war, both sides used it for observation posts – it changed hands a few times. Since it is right 'downtown', there is horribly QRN there. I manage to eek out 46Qs in a hour – that's all I'm able to pull through the S7 noise floor. Dang. Oh well. This site could use a good portable operation with higher up horizontal antennas to fight the QRN and to do a good job of putting it out. (For the lighthouse chasng folks, you can operate 1000 feet away as long as you can 'see the lighthouse – that would be a whole lot better as you could get away from the businesses that surround this). I've never got excited about activating light houses, but some do. They'd like you to be 'on or near' the lighthouse but many are in private hands or you can't get permission to attach anything to the structures. Did my bit – and headed to the Super 8 motel at South Padre Island. Good price – only \$45. Lots of spring breakers walking around in large groups on the lower part of the island by the beaches but the main groups of them would arrive in 2 or 3 weeks – 100,000 of them!

For dinner I head to Gabriela's – a Italian place well reviewed on TripAdvisor. On the expensive side, but this is a tourist mecca full of half million dollar condos and \$200/night beachfront rooms. The weather was sunny but only 60 degrees so I wasn't inclined to jump in the Gulf! That probably didn't deter too many teens and youngsters though! There were the usual fast food places if that was your preference.

Thursday – March 8

After breakfast at the Super 8, I head back out – and decide to do another quick run at the Lighthouse. Maybe the QRN would be down as businesses not open at 7am in the morning. Noise was down! Added in 15Q – a few DX – not many US folks around at 7:30 in the morning and bands not quite open. Moved on after that to hit one I almost missed running. Down in this neck of the woods, there are lots of small preserved woodlands – well, mostly swamps – with small pockets of private, local, state – and just two national NWRs. I overlooked the Lower Rio Grande NWR on my trip planning but noted it at the last minute while double checking things at the motel last night.. KFF -0550.

Takes a while to 'find it'. Do and put it out for a good run. There are two or three parts to this NWR apparently. From the web:

“Only 5% of the native riparian, floodplain, and wetland habitats remain along the lower Rio Grande and its local tributaries. However, the diversity within these fragments adds up to a significant 1,200 species of native plants, 700 species of vertebrates (including

nearly 500 bird species), and 300 species of butterflies. Eleven different biological communities exist on the National Wildlife Refuge, from the Chihuahuan Desert thorn forest to tidal wetlands.

Wildlife include the rare ocelot, northern caracara, Mexican bluewing butterfly (*Myscelia ethusa*), great kiskadee, red-billed pigeon, Altamira oriole, ringed kingfisher and green jay.

The refuge is designated as part of the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, a network of wildlife viewing sites throughout the Texas coastal regions.

Trails, observation decks and wildlife watching areas make it easy to see diverse creatures and spectacular views throughout the 40,000-acre Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Containing a few of the area's premier wildlife watching destinations including Boca Chica Beach and La Sal Del Rey, this refuge is one of the most biologically diverse in the system."



On to the next - Resaca de la Palmas State Park - KFF-3052

from Wiki:

“Resaca de la Palma State Park is one of three state parks belonging to the World Birding Center and managed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. At 1,200

acres, Resaca de la Palma State Park is the largest of the World Birding Center sites and is located in Brownsville. The property was acquired by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in 1977 and was opened to the public in December 2008. A resaca is a type of oxbow lake that can be found in Texas, and is a former channels of the Rio Grande. It is naturally cut off from the river, having no inlet or outlet.”



Pulled in – did my radio bit – looked around a bit – then headed out to the next. I'm not a bird watcher. Some are. Here you can rent a bike to ride around.

Next up – Estero Llano Grande, KFF-3006 – Hidalgo County. It's just a few miles south from where Barry and Joyce, W9UCW and WB9NUL, held many minis in Weslaco.



From the web:

“At the geographic center of the World Birding Center network, Estero Llano Grande State Park in Weslaco attracts a spectacular array of South Texas wildlife with its varied landscape of shallow lake, woodlands and thorn forest. Even beginning birders and nature lovers will enjoy exploring this 230 plus-acre refuge, which is convenient to all the Rio Grande Valley has to offer.

There is a wildlife-viewing deck, boardwalks, an observation deck, and over five miles of trails.

Estero Llano Grande has a well-deserved reputation as a can't-miss birding destination. In late summer, when water is at a premium, hundreds of waders & shorebirds flock here, including the endangered Wood Stork, along with colorful coastal species like the Roseate Spoonbill and Ibis. Migrating waterfowl also make a beeline for the park's narrow, shallow lake. Elsewhere, woodland & thorn scrub harbor all the must-see Valley specialties such as the Groove-billed Ani & Altamira Oriole. Adding spice to this mix, visitors may even spot rare Red-crowned Parrots and Green Parakeets.

Tawny crazy ants, an exotic invasive species, are in the park. These ants may crawl on your shoes, but they do not sting. Please be prepared to treat around your vehicle and camping equipment. TPWD is working with experts to reduce the number of ants without harming the park's natural resources.”

Had a good run from a new county – and then headed to the next.

Santa Ana NWR is yet another NWR that's a bird refuge – KFF 0554

from the web:

“Along the banks of the lower Rio Grande is the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, a 2,088 acre refuge established in 1943 for the protection of migratory birds. Considered the “jewel” of the refuge system, this essential “island” of thorn forest habitat is host or home to nearly 400 different types of birds and a myriad of other species, including the indigo snake, malachite butterfly and the endangered ocelot.

At an ecological crossroad, Santa Ana is strategically located where subtropical climate, gulf coast, great plains and Chihuahuan desert meet. Thousands of birds from the Central and Mississippi flyways funnel through the area on their way to and from

Central and South America. This small patch of midvalley riparian woodland is also habitat for about one half of all butterfly species found in the United States.

Before dams and control structures significantly reduced the flow of the Rio Grande, periodic floods cut shifting channels into the delta creating crescent-shaped oxbow lakes, referred to as “resacas.” Santa Ana's management program mimics the historical flooding of the Rio Grande, maintaining the bottom land hardwood forest and providing crucial nesting and feeding habitat for birds, watering holes for animals, and homes for countless amphibians, reptiles, crustaceans and insects.

With over 95 percent of the original habitat in the lower Rio Grande delta cleared or altered, Santa Ana is a reminder of the semitropical thorn forest that once dominated the area. Bobcat, coyote, armadillo, long-tailed weasel and Mexican ground squirrel are a few of the mammals found on the refuge. The endangered ocelot and jaguarundi are also present but rarely seen.”

There was a problem with wild fires at the moment – that were being fought in one area of the park. Some sparks from a wild fire across the Rio Grande River had set part of the park on fire and 300 acres burned. Most of it was 'closed' including the main road in. Tried the admin area which was open but got asked to 'please leave' shortly thereafter as I wasn't an 'official vehicle'. So I had to do a bit of searching to find out if there was anywhere I could operate and be 'in the park'. Took over an hour. With a little help from Google maps and a local immigration officer patrolling the side roads – who knew which property was which, I found a spot that was 'part of the park' in an out of the way back dirt road spot and ran it. You're only a few miles from Mexico and there are dozens of border patrol agents everywhere down here. If you're stopped along border roads, they'll often stop by and ask what you're doing. This one helped me out – verified the Google map bit. Did 73Q from here.

It was getting late in the afternoon, so headed on in to the motel – Days Inn – in McAllen TX. Dinner at a nearby Furr's Buffet – very good. Slept well.



Friday – March 9 2018

I head out after a good breakfast at the Days Inn – to Bentsen Rio Grande State Park – a small one in Hidalgo County. This is a small park – 2 square miles. From Wiki:

“The park had its beginnings on January 28, 1944, when the parents of Senator Lloyd Bentsen, Lloyd M. Bentsen Sr. and his wife Edna Ruth Bentsen, along with Elmer and Marie Bentsen, donated 586 acres of land to the State Parks Board for a nature habitat. The park currently encompasses 764 acres and has become a prime area for bird watching and butterfly watching. When the Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park became the headquarters of the World Birding Center's network of nine sites in 2004, vehicular traffic was banned and RV camping was no longer allowed in the park. The other sites, all located in south Texas, include Edinburg Scenic Wetlands; Harlingen Arroyo Colorado, Resaca de la Palma State Park, Roma Bluffs, Quinta Mazatlan, Old Hidalgo Pumphouse Nature Park, Estero Llano Grande State Park, South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center. More than 325 species of birds, and more than 250 species of butterflies have been noted in the Bentsen park. The park is popular to butterfly watchers. The North American Butterfly Association operates the National Butterfly Center adjacent to the park. “



I just pulled into the parking lot. There's not even an entrance station there but you go over to the birding center 1000 feet away to register and pay your fee. Skipped that. Put 102Q in the log and it was time to move on. Today I'd be passing through Starr, stopping in Zapata for a park, then on to other counties to run (Maverick) – before winding up in Webb at a park then stopping for the night.

In Zapata, you find Falcon State Park KFF 3008 in Grid EM06. Not too many live thereabouts. This park is in both Starr and Zapata Counties – if you watch your GPS (with county lines) you can actually stop at the county line, but it is on the main road. Since I'd already ran Starr, I just sat in the boat trailer parking lot in Zapata 100 feet from the C/L. Had a good run with a few DX stations making it through. Located on the shore of 85,000 acre Falcon Reservoir, you've got camping/RVing, boating on the lake, beaches and fishing – as well as birding – lots of marshes around the lake to help the wildlife.



Stayed 2 hours then had to move on – through Maverick over to Lake Casa Blanca KFF – 3025 in Webb county.

From Wiki:

“Lake Casa Blanca is a reservoir on the Chacon Creek, 5 miles northeast of downtown Laredo, Texas, United States. The reservoir was formed in 1951 by the construction of a dam to provide recreational opportunities for the residents of Webb County. 525 acres surrounding the lake is a park that was operated jointly by the City of Laredo and Webb County before it was leased by the state in 1990 and opened in March 1991 as the Lake Casa Blanca International State Park”.



Drove in at 2040Z in the afternoon and spent 2 hours there making over 100Qs. Lots of 'passer by' types on 20m SSB. After the runs, I headed in to the Days Inn in Laredo TX. \$80. Dinner at the local Golden Corral buffet restaurant.

Saturday March 10

On this day, the OKLA QSO Party starts up at 9am TX time. While I didn't need any OK counties (just finished them off myself), I could work the mobiles from the parks, and when not in parks, give them another contact. The CHNews will cover the OK QSO Party in detail later in this issue.

Also all weekend is the ID QSO Party. I'll hunt for them.

I was up early and headed out early. There's lots of miles to travel to the north. I stop on the C/L of Zavala and Dimmit and put it out for the county hunters. The OK QSO

has started. There's W3DYA in McCurtain OK.....got him. KK6MC/p goes in the log on his C/L, as does W0BH. Next up is Kinney TX. Put it out, and catch mobiles W5CT, K5CM, KE5XX in the contest. Work a fixed station too – didn't hear too many of them, just a handful.

There's not much along the way to Kickapoo Cavern State Park. Lots of boring roads – but I get there at 1653z, and pull in and get to work. From Wiki:

“Kickapoo Caverns was opened as a state park in 1991. The park is located 22 miles north of Brackettville, Texas, straddling the Kinney and Edwards county line. Interesting features of the park include 20 known caves, two of which are large enough to be significant. Kickapoo Cavern is approximately .25 mile in length (1400 feet). The park contains 14 miles of mountain biking trails, and 18 miles of undesignated hiking and birding trails.”

Stuart Bat Cave (formally Green Cave), slightly shorter than Kickapoo at 1,068 feet, is home to large numbers of Mexican free-tailed bats for part of each year. The bats migrate to the cave in mid-March, and usually stay through the end of October. Bat flights are often spectacular, and public observations are available with an entrance permit. “

The park has campsites for tents and recreational vehicles (water, electricity, and sewer hookups).

No commercial internet there. Hmm.....no Verizon or AT&T. Hard to spot when you don't have the ability to spot. Ah...this is a TX state park. I wander over to the “HQ” area which has a parking lot 500 feet away from the HQ – but there is a restroom with a wi-fi antenna on top at the parking lot. Nearby it's generating S7 noise on the radio, but if I move 200 feet away, I've still got a decent wi-fi signal and the noise is down to S1. Serendipity. Even in the boonies, most TX state parks have wi-fi at the entrance gate and one or two other spots in the park. (Not all – and not all the 'SNA' – state natural areas which are often way, way out in the boonies).

Next I head over to Seminole Canyon State Park 30 miles west of Del Rio. I go right by the Amistad Rec Area which is a former NPOTA site and still in the WWFF. No time at the moment to stop – got to get to the new one.



From the web:

“Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site is a 2,172.5-acre site operated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. It is estimated that human habitation of the area began 10,000 years ago, during the Holocene era when mammoth animals would have also inhabited the area. Vegetation is believed to have been a denser and richer variety to support the life of the area. The erosion that happened over the ages can be seen in some of the area rock walls. Indigenous peoples began to leave cave art evidence of their presence some 2,000–8,000 years ago.

Gaspar Castaño de Sosa is believed to have been the first European to arrive in the area, during his 1591 trek up the Rio Grande and along the Pecos River, in his effort to establish Spanish colonization of New Mexico. During the 19th century the Black Seminole Scouts of the United States Army were stationed to the area, giving the region its name. The Southern Pacific Railroad built into the area in 1882.”

The park opened in 1992.

It's getting to be late afternoon – 20:25 – so I get to work putting out the park in Val Verde County. Wow- heat wave – 96 degrees outside! I have a good run and head on in to La Quinta in Del Rio after 2 hours. 30 miles back to the motel/town. Dinner at the Sirloin Stockade next door. Hit the hay early. I'm tired out and tonight the time fairy will steal an hour tonight – Daylight Savings time starts at 3am. I'm pretty far west in TX and the time zone – late sunsets already – and dark in the morning till 8am with DST this time of year.

Found a handful of ID stations during the day – half dozen on 20m SSB and just one on 20 cw.

Sunday March 11

I enjoy the breakfast at the La Quinta – and drag my feet a while. It's pitch black outside now at 7am. I still get away at 7:30 and make a small detour to the Amistad National Recreation Area nearby. This was a NPOTA site that folks wanted in 2016, but is included in the 4500 US WWFF sites now in 2018. I could do a 'quickie' and still get to my final destination. There weren't any un-run parks the entire way home except for one***. After this park, I'll be headed toward San Angelo where I could do a repeat of the State Park there.



Armistad Rec Area – San Pedro Part

I hit Amistad early in the morning. Whoa. What's this on 40M? DX? It's JA6CIP/6 and he is running an IOTA and a JA park! He's S9. Well, I don't know if he hear my mobile signal but give him a shout. Hey, it's a 'park to park' contact – in the log. How about that? Tune around a bit and catch DU3LA in the Philippines as well. Guess I need to turn my radio on early early in the mornings! 6Y5WJ goes in the log too! If I keep this up, maybe I'll get the new ARRL mobile DX award? (100 countries from the mobile). Hi hi

I get to work and the county hunters and park hunters show up. Toward the end, the OK QP is starting up again and I put a few of them in the logbook. I doubt they'll show up on LoTW. It's hostile toward county hunters and state QSO folks. First, if you are signing /m, you need to set up a separate account for the call/m. Then, you need to break down your log to individual counties, and cannot run county lines since LoTW won't take county lines. Now, you need to track grids as well, and grid lines can be in the middle of counties, so you might have to divide things up even further. No thanks.

I'll enter the parks into LoTW and it's as 'N4CD'...not N4CD/m. If you upload your log with N4CD/M, it will not give you a confirmation. I'm just entering the logs for the grids this year. Likely after this year, who knows? Grids go away for HF. Worse, for most ARRL Awards like WAS and Triple Play, you need to be within 50miles of your home location for those contacts to count. Only prefixes and DXCC can be worked mobile away from home. (and this year HF Grids).

Later in the day, the WI QP starts up. Whoa – signals are seriously weak out of WI. Mobiles are barely 339 copy if you hear them at all. Propagation is not working from there to here. I work them with difficulty. Only get a couple, and at 1000 miles, 40 m isn't going to work during the day. Turns out that 20M doesn't work for most people on this QSO party- nearly all the activity is on 40 and 80m.

Next – I head north. After you leave town, it's 87 miles of nothing. One or two large ranches along the way with gated access but nothing in sight. One teeny town of 2 closed small buildings but no services. You zip along at 75 mph until you get to Sonora TX in Sutton County. Hey, there's the turn off for Devils River State Natural Area. I'm NOT going to take it. NO NO NO. I haven't run this park. Why would N4CD drive on past it?

From the state web site:

“From Del Rio, go north on State Highway 277 for 45 miles, turn left on Dolan Creek Road (gravel) and go 18.6 miles to the SNA boundary. Dolan Creek Road is a rough 22-mile gravel/dirt county road with multiple low-water crossings. Use caution if you see flowing water! This is working ranch country, so please drive carefully and be mindful of loose livestock.

High-clearance vehicles with 8-ply rating minimum (to minimize flats and blowouts) are recommended. The nearest service station is 25 miles away and is not open all the time. The nearest full service station is 65 miles away.”

Nope, you won't catch N4CD in the Chevy Malibu with standard tires and maybe five inches of clearance on this road! No way!

Jerry, W5MIG, activated this park. He headed in with a friend on am off-road bikes and had a good activation. This is a perfect spot for you 4 wheel off roader types with those \$400/apiece 8 ply tires. He noted the road is pure rock in a few places and very rough in many spots. Definitely 4 wheel drive off-road Jeep type vehicles. Plus you 'ford' creeks at several points.

Passed the turn off by and waved at the SNA.

You head further north with not much of anything for miles and miles. Past the town of Sonora. It's dry as a bone out this way, little rain, and no fertile top soil. Well, an inch or two, then solid rock under it. Finally get to San Angelo State park at 1810z.

I catch a few WI stations – half a dozen. As I tune the band, there is Z60A calling CQ from Kosovo. They've already worked 100,000 QSOs from the 'new' ARRL radio country that just become an ARRL DXCC entity a few weeks ago. He's working split'. I pull over and figure out how to get my IC-706 split. Been a long time since I've done that. Not hard but you've got to hit the right buttons and then get the TX freq set. He's saying up, but no idea whether up 1 or 2 or 3. I try up 1. Hey, 3 calls and I'm in his log. Yeah! Another 'mobile DXCC country'. Fun!

Well, time to get to work and put county hunters for Tom Greene, and park hunters for KFF-3053 – San Angelo State Park - into my log. I've run this before a few months ago. But it's on the way home and nothing else new is within 500 miles. Sit in the park for 2 hours then head on in to the not so Super 8 motel in San Angelo. I didn't do my homework. What did N4CD find at the Super 8?

Continued in part 3.

New Wireless Band to take Away Frequencies?

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has identified 3450 to 3550 MHz for potential wireless broadband use. Amateur Radio has a secondary allocation of 3300 to 3500 MHz, sharing the spectrum with government radars; the popular "weak-signal" frequency is 3456.1 MHz. The NTIA oversees the use of spectrum by federal government agencies.

"America is the world's leader in Wi-Fi and 4G LTE, and we have claimed an early lead in bringing 5G to reality," NTIA Administrator David J. Redl said in making the

announcement. "It's essential to American competitiveness that we maintain our leadership in all of these areas."

The NTIA announcement is "great news," according to FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. "The Commission, working together with NTIA, has already made the 3.5 GHz band available for wireless services, and we recently initiated a process to consider whether all or parts of the adjacent satellite spectrum can also be made available" Pai said. "Altogether, this could unleash a contiguous block of hundreds of megahertz of valuable spectrum for new technologies and services, including 5G."

Redl said that the NTIA, in coordination with the Department of Defense and other federal agencies, has identified 100 megahertz of spectrum "for potential repurposing to spur commercial wireless innovation." He said the 3450 - 3550 MHz band "could be a key asset in our nation's broadband spectrum inventory." In the US, military radar systems operate in the 3450 - 3550 MHz band, and Amateur Radio compatibly shares the lower half of that band with the military on a secondary basis. Redl said the Defense Department plans to submit a proposal under the Spectrum Pipeline Act to carry out a comprehensive RF engineering study "to determine the potential for introducing advanced wireless services in this band without harming critical government operations." ARRL intends to contribute to NTIA's study.

The FCC, in coordination with NTIA and the Defense Department, has already approved rules for its planned Citizens Broadband Radio Service (CBRS) in the adjacent 3550 - 3700 MHz band.

In 2014, UK telecommunications regulator Ofcom announced that it was ending Amateur Radio access to significant portions of the 2.3 and 3.4 GHz bands following a year-long consultation -- a rulemaking proceeding -- that involved the release by the Ministry of Defense of 150 MHz of spectrum at 3.4 GHz to prepare for the roll out of future 5G services. Amateur Radio in the UK was secondary on both bands. Ofcom said it expected the spectrum to go on auction later this month.

OKLA QSO PARTY

This was a good one with many mobiles out running. County hunters W3DYA and AF5Q were in the fray. From the 3830 contest reflector:

KK6MC MOBILE 802 CW

This is a good contest to work mobile, there is lots of activity and the counties are small enough that you can get from one county line to another quickly. I had a good time in my second OKQP. Both bands were good on Saturday, but 20M pretty much shut down at 0000Z. Forty was open all day, even at noon QSOes were possible with both coasts. Sunday was a different matter, 20M was only open weakly at the beginning; partly due to the effects of starting the contest an hour earlier than the previous day. But even at midday, contacts did not come as quickly as they did Saturday. DX was minimal, but I did work OM on both 20M and 40M. I like the mobile bonus points for making 5 QSOs on 40M or 80M as it sets the strategy - start out at a new county line on 40M. I hit all of my planned counties but one. I had planned to operate from TEX/CIM near the end of the contest, but as I hit the Texas/Beaver county line there were only 45 minutes left in the contest, so I just operated from Texas county.

I tried out a new antenna for me. On 40 it was a Hustler resonator on a 7ft mast, putting the tip of the whip at 12 ft 8 inches. On 20M, the Hustler resonator was mounted perpendicular to the mast at the 7 ft level. The 40M bandwidth is narrow enough that it is hard to work SSB, but as I was CW only, that did not matter. On 20M, the lower part of the SSB band can be worked.

The score is down a bit from last year, but I think that reflects conditions and everyone's will be down a bit. There were lots more 40M contacts than 20M contacts, which reflects conditions, and I hope, my improved 40M antenna.

AF5Q mobile 629 cw 9 ssb

Thanks to everyone that worked me. Ran 18 counties from Cimarron to Alfalfa and then a change in route Sunday took me to SW Oklahoma from Harmon all the way east to Stephens and Jefferson.

Great propagation on 40m, but 20 was weird. Cya all again next year as we will definitely do it again. Some worried about my CW, was because I was going down 412 in Beaver county.

W5CT multi-op mobile - racked up 1131 cw 31 ssb qso
Operator(s): K5PI W5MJ WK5S

K5CM mobile - 1058 cw 105 ssb

Thanks so much for the mobiles, AF5Q, KE5XX, K5CM, K5ZZR, W5CT, W0BH, KK6MC, and W5DYA. They spent many hundreds of dollars on gas, food and lodging over the fun filled weekend.

Conditions were as to be expected considering where the sun spot cycle is currently setting (at zero). It was fun to work OM2VL on 80 meters while the sun was still up in Oklahoma.

All Q's are important, but here are some of the most worked:

50 W5CW

38 WB2ABD

20 or more W7OM, W5M, K2DSW, K7TM

16 or more K0TI, KN4Y, OM2VL, WB9HFK, K4AMC, K1RO, K0PV

12 or more KM4FO, W6OUL, W0SEB, N4CD, K5WE, NO5W, N6HC, N2IGW, K0AP

10 or more W7GF, N9NM, N5NA, KJ4IWZ, KG4CRJ, KA5VZG, K1IB, W5CT

8 or more W0ZQ, K7ZYV, AA1ON, N5DO, KQ3F, KD8DEU, K9CW, K5OT/2, K0PC

7 AA5VU, KC3X, KE0TT, NC4H

73, Connie/k5cm and Pam/n5kw

WB2ABD - fixed NY 243 cw

40m workable all day both days ... thanks to mobiles with the great ears and great signals. Missed just a couple of counties, darn it. Bit of a challenge digging thru DX pileups to find OK stations.

N5PHT - portable in Marshall OK - 204 cw

Report from KFF-2791, Oklahoma (Lake Texoma State Park). This is a last minute thought when I realized the OK QSO Party was going so I zipped up here from my home (40 miles away). Had a difficult time getting full size G5RV up and then after a

few hours of that I realized I left the feedline coax at home!! So I did piece together enough short pieces to get on the air.

W0BH mobile - 655 cw 567 ssb

After my dad (age 93) went SK earlier this year followed by his sister (my aunt age 95) a week later, Lorna and I really needed some relaxing time away. A weekend OKQP and bird watching trip sounded just right, so we decided to take it easy and enjoy Oklahoma. I made up a schedule which included 27 northern counties and associated birding stops. We decided to run flex time compared to our usual "keep to the minute" run.

We went down a day early and started out at the Great Salt Plains wildlife refuge. It was really dry with many marshes completely evaporated. Fire had burned most of the underbrush surrounding the marshes, but we did see good birds clustered together in and around the remaining water. Lorna didn't think she'd see anything new if we went there again to start off the OKQP, so, after an overnight in Enid where my dad used to live after he moved off the farm, we headed directly for our first three-county line.

Conditions weren't good at first, but making three contacts each time someone called kept the rate from getting really depressing. Things picked up a bit as the day went along, but we certainly missed John/N6MU who alone gave us 76 contacts last year. 20 opened for awhile and 40 was good all day, but I didn't hear any OK mobiles and only made a few contacts with OK fixed stations, usually across the state but several times same county. DX was really sparse. I only worked OM2VL on 40m and was really surprised to see he'd worked everyone but me on 20, usually a number of times. It could have been my northern route, but I also wonder if my 20m antenna was working properly. It seemed like I could hear fine when the band was in and I got good reports at times, but I really wonder. If anyone remembers anything interesting about my 20m signal strength compared to other mobiles, let me know. I'll do some checking on this end, too.

The highlight of the trip was Osage County and the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. Osage county is one of the biggest if not the biggest county in Oklahoma on the northeastern border with Kansas. We drove many miles up and down on well-maintained but very dusty gravel roads to get there. We were greeted by a no fences short and tallgrass prairie with bison (buffalo live in Africa my

biologist XYL tells me) roaming free and crossing the road in front of us. Wow, absolutely spectacular. Light winds, clear blue sky, the American West as it was a hundred years ago. Worth the trip right there.



Buffalo at the Preserve

I usually avoid long times in counties because the rates drop off dramatically after working the "regulars." While Lorna dodged bison heading to the Visitor's Center, I worked out 20m and 40m CW and 20m SSB. I hadn't had much luck on 40m SSB earlier, but with plenty of time I gave it a try and hit the jackpot. Everyone came out of the woodwork for a total of 142 Osage county contacts as I described what we were driving through! We stopped for a few bison photos through the window. The Visitor's Center was closed by the time we got there, so Lorna took a birding trail instead and I had some supper.

After an overnight in Miami in the farthest northeastern county of Ottawa, we started back and picked up several counties we'd missed the day before. Conditions were much better on 40m to start. Another birding stop in Bernice State Park gave us extra time in Delaware County. We threaded our way through some new counties before reconnecting with I-35 for a fast trip north into a rather stiff headwind. The time change always throws me off as I forgot to set the van clock ahead, but I knew we couldn't be an hour ahead of schedule! Our last stop was a favorite three county line near my dad's farm, where I had over an hour to rack up some Qs. Didn't happen. Lots of CQs and what seemed like fair signals, but no real run. I just hung in there in the middle of nowhere until time ran out. It seems like I'm complaining, but actually the trip really was relaxing, no equipment or van problems, and great company! Some day the sunspot cycle will improve.

Stats

Operated 15.7 hours, 1257 Qs, 437 unique calls, 35 dupes, 743 OKQP miles.

States not worked : DE HI ND NE NV

Canadian mults worked : AB BC MB ON QC

Special thanks to my top scorers:

28: WB2ABD

20: K2DSW N6HC W6OUL

19: K0PV K1RO

18: NU1O

17: K0TI W7OM

16: KA5VZG WZ6ZZ

15: K1IB NA2X

14: K4AWM KM4FO

12: KK4AND

13: K7TM

12: KK4AND

11: K4AMC W2RR WB9HFK

10: K2HVN K4MIJ N4CD N9NM NC4H W7GF WA1SAY

09: AA1ON AH6AX KF3EB KG4CRJ NW8U

08: K9CW

07: AB7RW K6OWS KA3CZY KD2HZI KN4Y N0EMU NK7L NW0M WA2WAP
WE6C

06: K0RJW K4JP K4MM K7SEN VA2CZ W0SEB W9DC

05: K0OO K0SN K3DMG K5OT/2 K6PGH KD8DEU KE6TUH N5NA W6GMT
WA3QNT WD5CSK WE7G/M

Afterwards

Thanks to Connie/K5CM (and Pam/N5KW) for managing the OKQP and getting us all organized for another fun run. And thanks to all of you for the contacts!

Oklahoma has its really beautiful parts, and we found some of them again this year.

The 2018 Tenth Anniversary Kansas QSO Party is scheduled for August 25-26. With 105 counties, we need all the help we can get, so mobiles, head this way!

Everyone else, thanks for the Qs in Oklahoma, and see you down the log in 2018

73, Bob/w0bh and Lorna/k0why

NO5W - fixed - LA - 65 cw 39 counties

OK QP has always been one of my favorites beginning with the years when W5ZL-SK and KU5B and I would drive up from the Austin-Houston area to do a roving operation -- even the year we got caught in a blizzard on the first day of spring was fun. This year W5CT/m carried on that tradition (w/o the blizzard) and we stayed home in LA having fun tracking the mobiles. Conditions were not that great and as expected 20m was not productive from New Orleans with only a few Qs with stations in the northern part of the state. 40m was only so-so on Saturday afternoon but really came to life Sunday morning -- unfortunately we had to cut our Sunday operation short due to a severe thunderstorm.

Thanks to the following mobiles for keeping it interesting: K5CM(12), W5CT(11), KE5XX(11), W3DYA(8), KK6MC(6), W0BH(4).

73/Chuck/NO5W

K0PV - 112 cw 63 counties worked

Many thanks to the mobiles for many new OK Counties! I was in & out all weekend. Loads of fun running 75watts to a wire. Was on 40 cw ONLY! Mobile participation was outstanding. Special thanks to: W5CT/M (22) W0BH/M (19) K5CM (16) KE5XX/M (13) AF5Q/M (11) KK6MC (11) W3DYA/M (8).....Sure hope you guys use LOTW! :-)

73, Don K0PV
Aurora, CO

KN4Y - fixed -FL 111 cw 52 counties

Band condition compared to taking a bath in lukewarm lemonade. Plenty of non-fixed operations, total ten, was fun and made hot coffee enjoyable. Sunday afternoon not as advertised.

K0AP - fixed KS - 88 cw counties

Despite the poor band conditions I truly enjoyed this Qso party. Missed few OK counties that I needed but due to the short skip, working OK from KS on any band except maybe on 80m, is a challenge. Saturday had better band conditions. Sunday at the start of the QP I could hardly hear any OK mobile station. While on Saturday I was able to hear/work W5CT and K5CM without a problem, on Sunday nada, zilch, zero... until close to the end of the QP. Very, very strange. Great activity by the mobiles. W5CT, K5CM, AF5Q, KE5XX, W3DYA, W0BH ... as well as the fixed stations. Many, many new OK counties in the log. Thank you guys!

73 Dragan K0AP

N9NM - fixed TX - 75 cw 48 counties

I used my K3 at 100w and a dipole up 20 ft. I had a lot of fun doing this contest. There was plenty of activity from all over OK. I especially want to thank all those rover stations who drove both days to supply us with so many different counties. We really appreciate all of your efforts

OM2VL - DX - 58 cw 10 ssb - 39 counties

Extremely bad condx ... Before the QP I made some US stations, but all was very light. No way to Oklahoma this year .. I heard some mobiles weak, but 20m closed at 16Z - absolutely dead band. I missed many many counties during this part of the QP, because 40m opened only at 21:42Z. at 20Z short 15min opening again on 20m : 4 QSO.

With Bob W0BH I made only 2 QSO - only 1 county from his 19 - in last 30 minutes of the QP on 40m, no any QSO on 20m.

I was QRV only on Saturday.

Most QSOs with: K5CM 18/9, W5CT 16/13, AF5Q 8/8, KK6MC 6/6, W3DYA 4/4, KE5XX 3/3.

Thanks for the QSOs!

73, Laci OM2VL

N4CD was mobile down in TX. Worked a lot of OK mobiles – seemed to be the right distance for 40M skip! Over 30 counties in the log.

On the Road with N4CD Part III

There are a few Wyndham motel properties in San Angelo – where I spent this night. I should have read TripAdvisor first but didn't. Usually Super 8 motels are decent. This one was \$37 plus tax bring it to just under \$41 for the night. Low cost. The Days Inn was \$60. Well, in this case, you get what you pay for. The room was clean - many complained they got unclean room and sheets. There was an alarm clock but it didn't work. There was a coffee maker but no coffee to make coffee with. Otherwise, the place had a fridge and a microwave and large size TV that seemed to work with basic channels and small package of other channels. This is an old place and it shows – dings in the walls, paint scrapes. A napkin was stuffed into the peephole in the door. Guess the peep hole glass was missing. Did have new 'electronic key locks'.

The reviews on TripAdvisor for this place were 'poor', 'avoid', 'never again' and similar. Still, the parking lot had at least 30 cars overnight – mainly low budget travelers and contractors.

Some of the reviews:

“The young lady behind the desk was of no help and when asked for coffee, juice, milk she said they were out. When the nearby lobby restroom was out of toilet paper she stated that it is supposed to be closed because she had not cleaned it since Tuesday and that she was out of toilet paper. She seemed to be more interested in sleeping behind the desk rather than doing her job.”

“Everything was so dirty the bed sheets had blood the wall had blood I would never stay there at all the shower was nasty and the toilet didn't flush “

- - - - -

“We pulled up and it was a sketchy part of town. I carried a can mace to unload and load our truck. Only stayed here because I needed an additional night from my previous booking and this was all I could find. The bedding had holes and tears in it. Grout was missing in the bathroom floor. Stains in the tub. Carpet has multiple places where gum had been ground in. We wouldn't take our socks off. Saw a roach crawling across the floor the second night. Staff was friendly but this hotel is in need of updates and repair BADLY. There was a strong odor coming from the bathtub drain. Lines and towels were clean but no amount of vacuuming could help that carpet. Awful. “

- - -

I'm not sure if this room had ever been cleaned. The blanket in my nonsmoking room was covered in burn holes. The carpet was so dirty I didn't feel comfortable taking my shoes off!”

- - - - -

My room wasn't bad. Bed was OK. Slept well. Blanket good.

Dinner was at the King Buffet that used to be the Asian Buffet – a few miles away.. Excellent.

I was tired and hit the hay early at 9pm. Slept well. Driving and ham radio operating wear me out at the end of the day – hi hi.

Many years ago, we had a mini in San Angelo hosted by Randy, AJ5ZX and Janet, KC5QCB. Now, the only well attended mini inviting all county hunters to attend - in the entire country - is in MI hosted by Ed, K8ZZ and Joe W8TVT. It's coming up in April. Still time to reserve a room and register.

Monday March 12

Today didn't start out too well. The temperature had dropped to near 40 and it was dark outside. Wandered over to the office. Breakfast at the 'budget' Super 8 was a waffle, bowl of cereal, and coffee with no sweetener. No napkins, either. If you wanted toast – that's all you got – no butter or jelly. No sticky buns – not that I partake of them, but Super 8 usually has them. No fruit. This is a bare bones place. No decaf. It's almost like they have a sign 'we really don't care' which is their motto. Checked out after putting the radio in car at 7am. Dark outside. Very dark as the sun didn't rise till 7:58 am in this part of TX.

About 20 miles down the road I turned on the radio. Oops....no radio. What's going on here. Find a safe place to pull over – actually a convenience store and take a look. Still real dark outside. Oops – I note you can put the ICOM power connector on wrong in the dark. Actually 90 degrees off – and it blew the main fuse. Verified that with voltmeter – no volts on the power cord. Hope I didn't reverse polarize the radio.

Lucked out - (Fortunately not the radio broke). Hmmmm....where are my spare fuses? Probably at home. Dug around and found a fuse – white – hmmm....think that is 25a. Stuck it in and hope it will last the trip home. Or is it 20a or 15a? Guess I'll find out. Radio back to working. Some DX coming in on 40m. Hey, there's JH1GNU and he's S9 and calling CQ. Give him a quick call. He comes back – he notes we had a QSO a long time ago – has my name in the log. Small world. I'm 569 there today. I'm hearing a few US stations working him but band is 'long' at 7am in the morning. Big pileup on 9M6W with all sorts of DX'ers US and foreign calling him. Hundreds. No way I'm going to get him through that mess. He's having trouble copying anyone there it seems.

I'm headed to Lake Brownwood State Park – on the way home with minimal detour and arrive by 1435z – 9:30am now with DST. Have a good run with 83 in the log including some nice DX like CU3EJ, OK1ES, DK3BN, EA7TG, DL1EJA, IW2NXI and ON4VT. The rest are split between county hunters for Brown, TX and Park hunters for KFF-3024. Conditions are not good but I work at it with the 3cw bands and 20m SSB. Not as many casual passer by folks during the week, just a few. I leave at 1600z after an hour and a half. Time to keep moving toward home to avoid the rush hour through the Metroplex. The band is usually better when it just opens. Later in the day it fades away.



This is a 537 acre park – constructed by the CCC men back in the 1930s. The original dam/lake was built as a flood control dam in 1932 then turned into a nice park by the WPA.

Next up is a still in development park – Palo Pinto Mountains. There's two or three places you can run it. I'm parked by the inset gate and the ranger comes by – mentions most of the 'radio people' set up down by the lake area – a few miles more down the road. OK – head that way. Maybe it will be a bit quieter. It is but sort of blocked view to Northeast. Well, here goes. Mid day and 20M is really bad. Work and work at it – Palo Pinto County, park KFF-3047 in the system. Tough going. My key paddles are falling apart – the spring tension adjustment is kaput. Won't work – there's no tension and the paddles flop about making it very hard to send code right. Adjustment screw seems stripped out. Have to use two hands and an emergency rubber band kluged to put some tension on the adjustment screw. Dang. Plus the antenna coupler at the bottom of the mast is stripping out – making a poor ground connection there. I got work to do when I get home. Hope the radio holds together (as well as me) for another two dozen Qs to reach 44. Some of the rougher roads and 20 miles of gravel roads the GPS lady took me on are shaking things apart.



Band Aid fix on Schur Mobil-Key

Signals are mostly weak – a few directions good but most directions weak to not even there. I'm sweating not even getting to 44 here. Tough! Pull them out one by one. Only DX that makes it through is IK1GPG and NL7V. 8 QSO on 30m, 4 on 40M. Well, when desperate, go to 20M SSB. It's tough too – add 11Qs – half of them 'passer by' types that just get me over the 44 threshold. CA, FL, and NC it seems are the only directions that work on SSB well. Today is not a great day for propagation – mid day. Lots of folks went back to work. Bands are very empty - CW and SSB.

Got my 44 (did 48) – left. I like to get a few over just in case I had a dupe – someone worked me twice on same band/mode which doesn't count. Turned off radio as kluged paddles impossible to use while mobile and drove the last 140 miles to home – hitting the Metroplex an hour later – and dealing with a gazillion cars on 6 and 8 lane roads through the middle of 3 million plus 'urbia' for 50 miles.

Home finally – I'm worn out. The car needs an oil change and tire rotation – up to 71,300 miles. Radio/antenna/key needs fixing. This trip was 2,134 miles around just one part of TX – down to the tip and the Rio Grande Valley – then west – then circling back home again. Fun trip but lots of miles. My butt is worn out.

Now for 2 or 3 days of logging, entering 2,000 QSOs and 25 park runs into Fast Log

Entry to generate ADIF files for LoTW and the WWFF database.

Hope I ran something you needed. WB5JID noted I got five of his last six in TX, so that was good. Dragan, K0AP, got a dozen new ones.

WI QSO PARTY

K0PC mobile 643 CW QSO

A nice day for a drive through Wisconsin, much better driving conditions than last year. No visit from Murphy this year, everything worked great.

As others have said the band conditions were mixed. I was surprised how few QSOs I had on 20M, I think this is an all time low for that band by almost a factor of 2. I went to 80M earlier than usual and it became my most productive band. My first QSO on 80M was 1922z and my last QSO on 20M was 2246z. One lone DX contact this year with ON4AAC on 20M at 2104z.

I worked 199 unique calls and had many who rode along all day. Some of the heavy hitters:

CALL	QSOs
K0AP	14
K9CT	14
N0UR	14
W9EAU	13
K1RO	12
AF8A	11
K9WM	11
WA1UJU	11
WE9V	11

Many with 10 QSOs and less

Thanks to the West Allis Radio Club for their sponsorship of the WIQP and to everybody who followed me all day.

73, Pat KØPC

W0ZQ - mobile - 472 CW

Activated nine counties in stop & shoot mode. Based on recent contests I figured that 20 and 40m would be down this year and that 80m would be more of a player, but I didn't anticipate to what degree as 55% of my contacts were on 80m, from a mobile. And, it wasn't from the lack of trying on the high bands as I called CQ on 20m from all except my last county, the propagation just was not there. My apologies to those that called me on 40m when I was in PIE as I had a power line near by that was S9. Weather was good, everything worked, and I had a great time meandering through WI. Thanks to the WARAC for organizing this fun event and everyone for all the Q's.

73, Jon

WI9WI mobile - 150 cw

Twenty third year of operating the WIQP mobile. My main goal was to operate from some new counties in my never ending goal to operate the WIQP from every Wisconsin county SO Mobile solo. This year I bagged 6 new counties, FON, DOD, SHE, WAS, OZA, and MIL. I now have 13 to go, all in the northeast part of the state. One of the issues with doing this is the QSO party is only 7 hours long, and I spend a lot of time driving between counties. For safety reasons I do not operate while driving. Some may be able to do it, but I can't. This year I spent more time driving than operating. The shortest drive was between FON and DOD, 3 minutes. It was literally across the road. The longest was between DOD and SHE, 84 minutes. Actual operating time was about 3 hours. I had a few problems. The main ones were RF getting into the computer early on even though it had checked out fine in the driveway on Saturday. Some ferrite, cutting the power to 75 watts, and rearranging a few cables cured that. Apologies to those to whom I screwed up a few QSOs. The other was I continue to have antenna problems on 80 meters. I thought I had fixed them, but it was not to be so. I could load the antenna with the K3's tuner, but I was only putting out about 15-20 watts. This is not good when the best band was 80. Gotta work on that. You know 40 is long when you work Italians before 2 PM local with 75 watts and a mobile antenna. Twenty was a wasteland. I CQed on 20 at least 5-10 minutes in each of the first 5

counties, and garnered all of 3 QSOs.

More new counties next year.

Thanks to all for the QSOs

73

Jim WI9WI

W0AA mobile (WA0MHJ op) 50 cw QSO

Murphy strikes with an odd power problem that became un-repairable, just 45 minutes into the contest. Was to be same route as last year; We'll try it again next year. We came home and I got a few hours in from the Minnesota home station, then returned back to Wisconsin at the end for dinner with the N9T mobile team.

KE0TT rover - 129

K3/10 at 5 watts to either a 66' or a 130' inv vee up 20' at the apex, fed with parallel line and tuner. Good weather, good train watching, good eagle watching, but strange band condx, similar to last year where 40M goes long so I can't QSO any WI stations, and 20M was closed most of the time. 80M was the best band by far, but was dead until late afternoon, when it opened up for short and long QSO's. Always fun to be part of this Party. Set up in 4 counties: Crawford: 75 minutes/30 Q's. Vernon: 70 minutes/28 Q's. La Crosse: 25 minutes/25 Q's. Buffalo: 50 minutes/47 Q's. Rates improved as the day went on. C U next time.

73, Dan ke0tt/portable

NE9U mobile 323 cw 36 ssb qso

After spending two weeks in PJ4 and a few other wrinkles when we got home, we knew we weren't going to be able to have the time or ambition to assemble our usual mobile station. Plus KK9K wasn't able to spare the weekend.

But, but long time (27 years) partner N9BCA and I decided to go up north and have

fun anyway. We put together a jury rigged station that we only operated stationary.

So 4 hours of operating...3 hours of driving between stops. our jury rigged setup worked ok on 80, but had trouble tuning on 40. didn't appear to be much happening on 20.

Fun time as usual. We found our steaks Saturday night and had a nice breakfast Sunday morning on our way to stop #1.

Hopefully see everyone in 2019 with a serious effort again.

Scott NE9U
Art N9BCA

N9T (NR0T oper) mobile 213 cw 38 ssb qso

Only decent rates were on 80 CW, but never more than 80 per hour.
Note for next year, check 80 before 2130z.

- - - -

When you have a multi-multi contest type station, this is the result

W9EAU at W0AIH 469 cw 868 ssb QSOs

Ops:

160 CW: KB9S
80 CW: KB9S
80 PH: K5GKJ,N9DJB,KC9W,N0KD
40 PH: KI0F,N0BUI,KC9W,N9DJB
40 CW: K0TG
20 PH: KB9AZZ,N0KD,KC9W,N9DJB
20 CW: N0BUI,KI0F
15 PH: KB9AZZ
2 PH: KB9AZZ,N0KD

61 Counties

49 States
4 Canadian Provinces

Thank you Paul W0AIH for letting us use the Farm for another W9EAU WIQP Multi-Multi effort. Paul was visiting family in Pennsylvania over the weekend but he did find a local station there so he could make a few qsos as W0AIH/3.

Murphy hit our 40 meter cw station early when the bandpass filter decided to act like a dummy. Once the filter was bypassed we were back in business.

A fun day with friends and radio with a good crew of ops.
Thanks for the q's.

For more info on "the farm" look at: <http://www.qth.com/w0aih/>

73 Mark KB9S

Z60A Kosovo – for the DX'ers

Before shutting down on March 12, Z60A in Kosovo had logged 98,450 contacts during its celebratory operations to hand out a new one to the madding crowd. The 30-day-long initial activation of the newest DXCC entity encountered 30,541 individual call signs in 174 DXCC entities. "Mission Goodwill Kosovo" expressed appreciation to the 28 operators from various countries near and far who turned out to handle the pileups. The Z60A logs will be uploaded to Logbook of The World (LoTW) soon, and QSL cards will be at the printer's next

courtesy of ARRL Newsletter

There are likely to be many more expeditions there so don't sweat not getting it.

Idaho QSO Party

There didn't seem to be any mobiles out running. Big guns KA7T noted 444 QSOs on SSB and W7ZRC had 185 on cw and 284 on SSB. Most folks filing scores had 5,6 or 7 QSOs with ID stations.

I was looking for a clear frequency to make a run on SSB. Started down on 14.240 looking up the band. Well, dang, 14243 busy. ID station calling CQ IDQP. Worked him. 14247 busy. 14250 busy with QSO. 14.253 busy with ID station calling CQ IDQP. Naturally I work them. Every spot going up the band is either a QSO or ID QP station. I must be in exactly the right place. In short order, KA7T, AE7ID, KI7PUP, AG7EB and W7ZRC go in the log. Later catch W7ZRC on CW. Five ID counties. Six QSOs total. Heck, I'm competitive and I wasn't trying all that hard to find them. I never did find an open spot down in the lower part of the band for that park on SSB. When you run up at 14343, few 'passer by' types show up. You just get county hunters (and not many on SSB these days on 20M) and park hunters – if they can hear you with the weird 20M conditions many days.

None of the stations filing scores for the ID QP on the 3830 contest reflector had any comments.

Info from MARAC Awards Custodian Phil, AB7RW

This information is for every County Hunter. It pertains to the proper method for submitting applications for awards. Proper submissions will make the processing of awards more timely and make my task much easier.

The award applications are located at <http://marac.org> awards.

There are three formats outlined on this web page.

1 - **WAC** – At the top of the page, read the choices from the left ‘WORKED ALL 3077 COUNTIES’. This is also known as WBOW/Whole Ball of Wax. The first seven questions require information to be entered into the form. Leaving any of them blank will result in the awards program processing to halt. After the 7th question (callsign of last contact) is a statement: “Do not forget to fill a LC-2 for the above callsign”. To reward the station that gave you the last county listed in the above block Fill in the LC2 information. The WAC application is to have your award recorded, only. Nothing will be sent to the transmitting station that gave you the 3077th county unless you fill out an LC2 submission. Next you select the award you completed, the mode, the band and any other information you would like to add to a plaque. If you check YES for the plaque question, you need to submit the cost of your plaque that you desire. Recheck your information that you put in each block to make sure it is the information you wish to send for the award. Finally you must send your check made out to Mobile Amateur Radio Awards Club. If you make it out in my name, an argument results, and the bank will not cash your check.

As Pattie Hatt says, the WAC is to toot you own horn.

2 - **LC1** is the next choice. LC means Last County. The LC 1 pertains to the last county in a state. If AB7NK gives you Yavapai for your last county in Arizona, it is only proper that you acknowledge this with a thank you submission. No awards are given for an LC1 submission. It is only a thank you for filling in Arizona for you. Again, fill in all the blocks. Blocks 2, 7 and 8 do not need anything unless you are submitting an LC2, explained below. The V symbol means there are other selections for a particular block. Click on the V and highlight the selection that fits your award. The awards computer keeps track of all the LC1’s submitted for all the mobiles. When a total of 25 are attained, the LC1’s become LC3’s in the computer and an award is send to the mobile. This is the count you see printed “AB7NK was awarded #.. for 725 counties” Again, when you click on SUBMIT, your information appears on the next page. Please look it over and make sure it is correct. Also note Block 5 and 6. If you are submitting multiple awards, put the number for your total submissions in block 5. Block 6 will change automatically.

3 - **LC2** – While an LC1 recognizes the station that gave you the last county in a state, the LC2 awards the station that gave you the last county for the WBOW for the selected

award. To complete this application, you must fill in blocks 2, 7, 8, 20, 21, and 22. If you have never thanked a mobile station for their efforts to give you a last county, you can still submit it. The mobile would certainly appreciate it.

Keep in mind that I cannot fix errors in your submission and I cannot create an application for you based on an email message, I can only delete it and I will send you an email to let you know that your submission is in error. It is then up to you to submit a correct version. When the awards program does not like a submission, it halts; then I have to go through hundreds of emails to find yours to see what you did wrong. In the meantime, no awards are processed because of the delays. This results in receiving more emails asking “what is the hold up”

The backlog appears to be caught up. I want to thank everyone for your patience during my instruction period. A lot of the delay was caused by errors in submitting applications.

LA QSO Party

K0AP - fixed - KS - 44 cw Q, 44 counties worked

NO5W and W3DYA have done an amazing job covering many counties. I worked Chuck NO5W in 24 counties and Norm W3DYA in 13 counties. Both are FB CW operators. I had a blast. This Qso party produced 25 new LA counties toward my USA-CA. 40m was the money band. Only one Qso on 80m. No copy at all on 20m. The band conditions are nothing to brag about. Thanks to the organizer for putting a fine Qso party and especially to NO5W and W3DYA for a great rover operation. Looking forward to LAQP 2019.

W3DYA mobile

COMMENTS REGARDING LAQP 2018.

I'm not sure if there was actually less activity due to bad conditions, lack of interest, or

QRM from another contest, but it was probably my worse performance in LAQP. For example, band contacts: 20M - 60, 40M - 160, 80M - 11 (for 231). Very strange! Operating time was about four hours versus driving time of six hours during the ten hours I operated. I gave up after it got dark.

Driving time includes the time I spent spotting myself. Conservatively, I suspect I spent over an hour playing with my wife's tablet to spot myself. I enjoyed it a lot less than the time I spent in our coal mine on the farm for a few years in the 1940s. I'm not sure more practice will improve my skill on that damn thing!

Anyone care to comment on whether self-spotting made any difference for me during the QSO Party? It didn't seem to be much different than my time in OKQP last weekend. I did hear a few VAQP stations, but didn't contact any because they require a S/N... one of the reasons I stopped doing the PAQP!

HOWEVER, I did enjoy most of my operating time on Saturday and appreciate the many operators who stayed with me in spite of some terrible QRM and changing conditions.

Although I might improve my spotting with practice, I don't think it was worth the effort.

73, Norm, W3DYA

KN4Y - fixed -FL - 34 cw qso - 33 parishes

Not many CW fixed stations if not for two mobiles I would have 5 QSO's total. Need more local CW operators doing the Louisiana QSO party. Just short of boring.

NO5W mobile - 507 cw QSO

Probably the most striking thing about this year's LaQP were the poor conditions especially on 20m. For example in 2015 with the same operators, same equipment, and same route we had 808 Qs with 702 of those on 20m, 99 on 40m, and 7 on 15m. This year the tables were turned between 20m and 40m with 40m being the money band but not able to produce the Qs that 20m did in 2015.

Still we had fun and even Murphy thought the ride was good as he came along during the first three parishes to produce the error message "a USB device has failed". It turns out the USB device was the GPS being used by the logging computer. As best we could determine the extremely rough roads we were on had caused the GPS connection to vibrate loose enough that the OS marked it as a failure. Fortunately a little tape applied to the connection fixed that problem and Murphy pretty much disappeared for the rest of the day.

Thanks to the following stations who worked us in many parishes contributing more than half of our QSOs: K2DSW(28), K0AP(26), N5DO(25), KN4Y(23), K5OT/2(22), K4AMC(21), N2CQ(21), K0HNC(20), W0ZQ(18), WB9CIF(18), W0TG(15), N6MU(14), NW0M(13)

As is typical in these state QSO parties the morning was slow as seen by the low QSO numbers in East Baton Rouge - Washington all of which were morning parishes. The action picked up somewhat during the late afternoon when we were in Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Tammany. Due to Dallas-K1DW, the driver, having a heavy foot we actually finished up our route with two hours left in the party and no where to go except to try 80m and then to succumb to the call of the beer and pizza where the crew of Jim-W5TUF, Ted-KN5O, Dallas-K1DW, and myself were treated to some DXpedition tales by David-W5XU who had just returned from Spratly.

Many thanks to Norm-W3DYA who came over from Texas to provide some needed mobile activity in the north and central part of the state.

Also thanks to Dallas and Lynda for their hospitality putting me up Saturday night and for the early Sunday morning breakfast and conversation.

Coming up April 7 we will be back on the road sharing the driving and operating with Skip-W5GAI in the MS QP. We hope for better conditions and hope to put many of the QSO party group in the log. The route has not been determined yet so if you need some counties in MS send me an email and we might be able to work it in.

73/Chuck/NO5W

Devil's River SNA

AE5X takes on the challenge....

15-17 March: Truck camping in Devil's River State Natural Area KFF-3498 (DM99)
I'll be leaving early Thursday for a 2-night camping trip on the Devil's River in West Texas. The primary purpose of the trip is to photograph the night sky during the new (as in, no) moon. I'm a complete newbie at it but have watched a few YouTube videos and read the how-to's of the maestros and am eager to try my hand at it.

Camping in a tent on the ground? Nope - too old for that. Pulling the trailer with all the comforts of home in it? No way Jose, burns too many old dinosaur bones. Truck tent to the rescue! Inside is a mattress, sheets, pillow, lantern and...FT-891.



The camera, once set up, will do its thing on its own. Its thing will be to take a series of 25-second exposures of the sky once every 35 seconds. That'll go on for 4 or 5 hours while I play radio, listen to coyotes and sleep. There's no cell coverage there so I won't be able to self spot. Hopefully others will do that for me when they hear me.

The antenna will be my MFJ-1979 telescoping 17-ft whip mounted onto a Wolf River coil for resonance on 30 and 40 meter CW.

The Devil's River is in a fairly remote area and visitors are advised by the parks

department to take two spare tires. I'll be taking one and a flat fix-it kit. Access to the area involves a 22-mile drive along a gravel and rock road that takes an hour and a half and it's this road where some tires meet their demise.

- - -

Comment de N4CD – AE5X made it on the air for a few hours giving out the park. Not spotted the second evening or heard. Val Verde County, TX

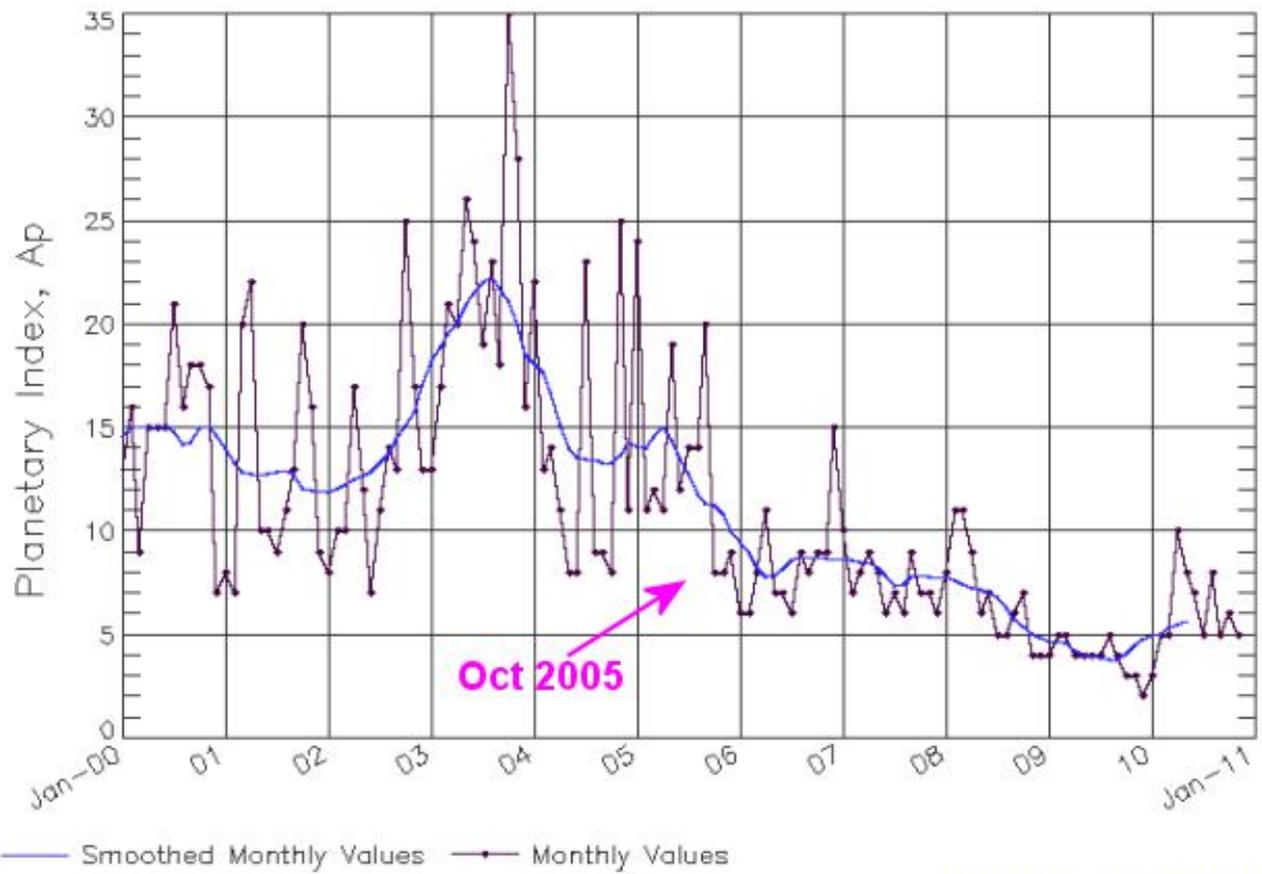
Solar News I

Approaching ‘grand solar minimum’ could cause global cooling
Anthony Watts / March 18, 2018

There's a lot of evidence mounting that solar cycle 25 will usher in a new grand solar minimum. Since about October 2005, when the sun's magnetic activity went into a sharp fall, solar activity has been markedly lower, with solar cycle 24 being the lowest in over 100 years.

ISES Solar Cycle Ap Progression

Observed data through Nov 2010

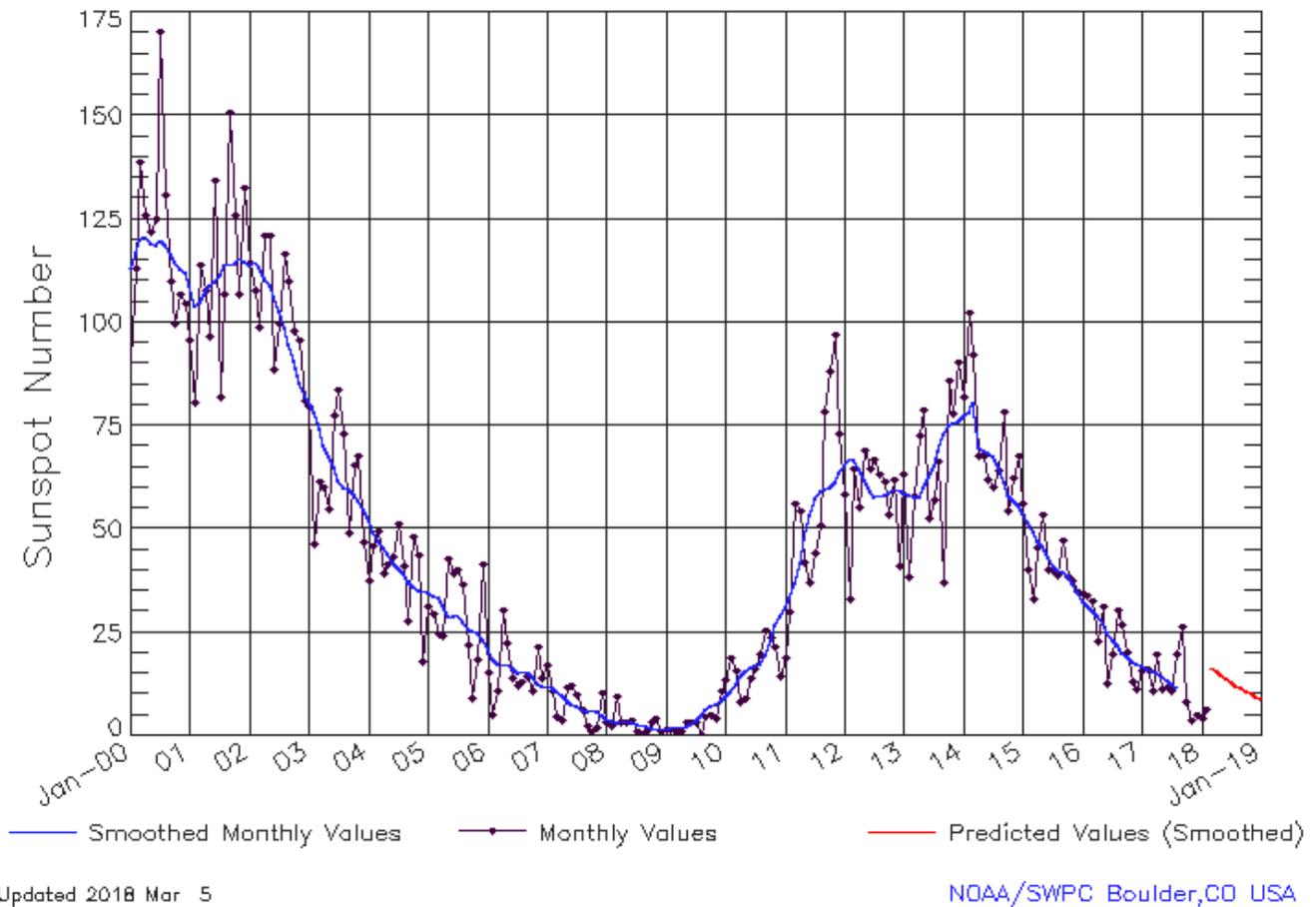


Updated 2010 Dec 7

NOAA/SWPC Boulder, CO USA

ISES Solar Cycle Sunspot Number Progression

Observed data through Feb 2018

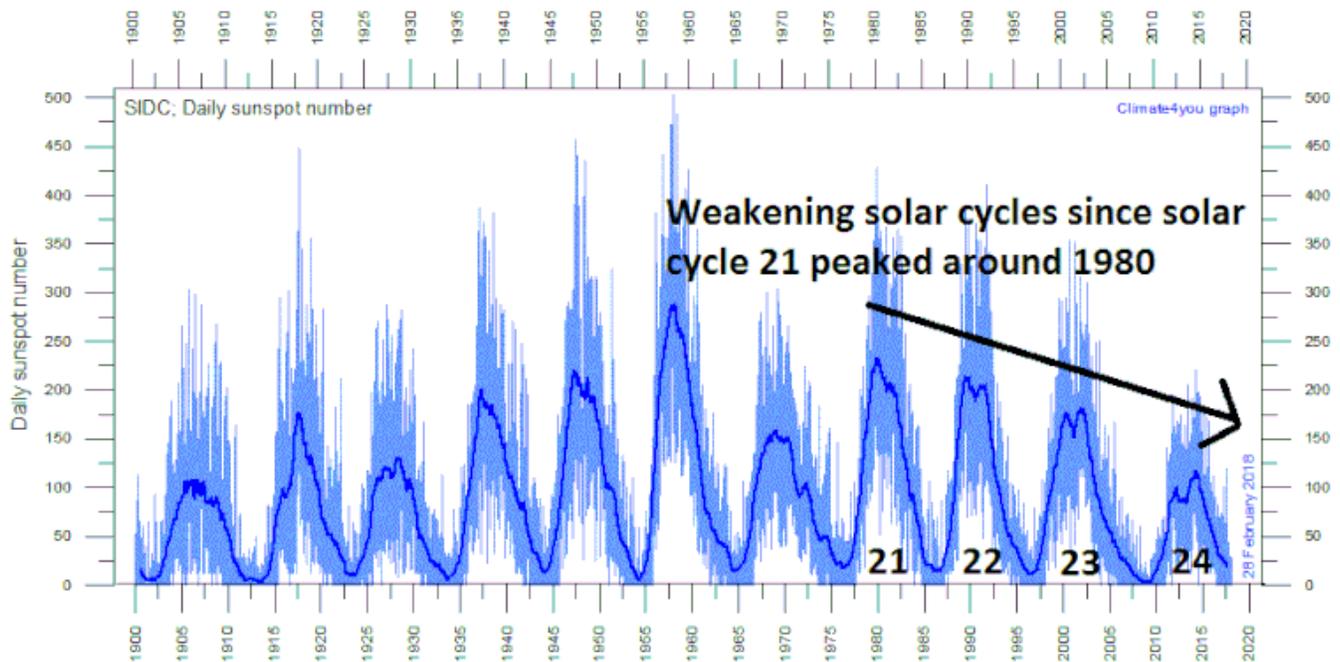


Meteorologist Paul Dorian at Vencore weather writes:

All indications are that the upcoming solar minimum which is expected to begin in 2019 may be even quieter than the last one which was the deepest in nearly a century.

Some scientists are even saying that we are on the cusp of a new grand solar minimum, and the upcoming cycle 25 may have even lower cycles after it.

This empirical modeling of solar recurrent patterns has also provided a consequent multi-millennial-scale experimental forecast, suggesting a solar decreasing trend toward Grand (Super) Minimum conditions for the upcoming period, AD2050–2250 (AD 3750–4450).



Simon Constable, in Forbes writes:

The question is whether we will enter another grand solar minimum just like the Maunder minimum which, if history is a guide, would mean a period of much colder weather winters and summers.

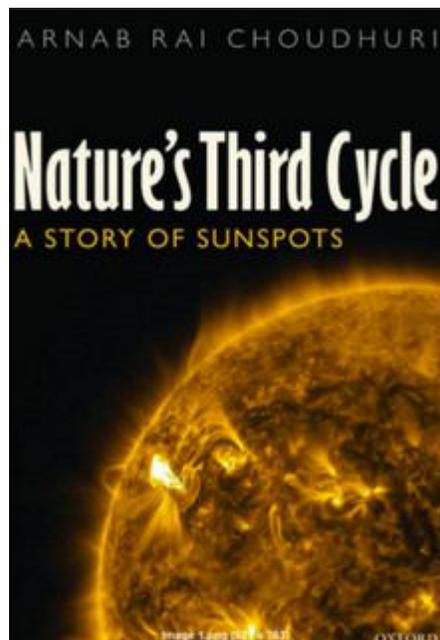
Once upon a time, people would worship the sun as a deity. It was with good reason that they did so for the sun provided much of what sustains life on our small planet, warmth and bountiful harvests. How would we survive if the sun stopped beating down on us? It was a real fear.

Then came science and industrialization. As the new era took over, we mostly forgot the sun and its importance to our existence. (Of course, most people occasionally complain that it is either too sunny or not sunny enough.)

But just because we stopped paying close attention doesn't mean that it lost any of its

importance to our world. And neither does the fact that the life of the sun is far more complex than many people realize. Indeed, if we are to believe the experts, the sun's behavior is about to change in a way that could have dramatic consequences for the food we eat and the broader economy.

That's why it is rather handy that an important book on the matter was recently published in paperback. *Nature's Third Cycle: A Story of Sunspots* by Arnab Rai Choudhuri.



The third cycle is that of the Sun and the dark spots which appear on the solar surface. The first two cycles are day versus night and the changing seasons.

Choudhuri gives us a condensed history of the study of the sun and of sunspots over the past few centuries back to Galileo Galilei, whose discovery of the Sun's 27-day rotation marked the serious start of solar physics.

The remarkable tale includes skilled amateurs as well as professional academics, the rivalries between the main players, and a probable husband-wife murder-suicide thrown into the mix. Yes, there is a lot in the story of studying the sun, and the author does a

masterful job of making it a fascinating read. Not too shabby when many scientific books do more to muddle the reader than to enlighten.

The names which might be familiar include the following: space observatory pioneer George Ellery Hale; discoverer of Uranus William Herschel; and astronomer Edward Maunder. It was the last of those men who identified a period from about 1640 through 1715 when the spots on the Sun disappeared. Usually, the number of dark blemishes on the solar surface tends to rise and fall in somewhat predictable 11-year cycles.

The period when the spots vanished, a so-called grand solar minimum, also coincided with a sort of mini-ice age with harsh winters and short cool summers. It became known as the Maunder minimum after the man who studied it.

Of course, the idea that the temperature of the earth could be changed by mysterious fluctuating dark patterns on the sun's surface is nothing if not controversial. But that doesn't mean it isn't true, as the author states:

[...] the earth indeed becomes cooler when sunspots go missing. Exactly how this happens is still a question on which experts seem to have very differing views and which is unlikely to be settled definitively in the near future.

Choudhuri takes pains to add that none of this negates the effect of industrialization on climate change. They are both critical factors.

However, the whole matter is complicated by the fact that while the world was warming up in the 20th century the number of sunspots were above their average count. Remember, other things being equal, more spots means warmer earth temperatures. When the book was published in hardback in 2015, the author was reluctant to forecast the likely outcome of the current sunspot cycle.

But what has become more apparent based on more recent research from NASA is that we are now in a period of very few or no sunspots. This has coincided with the brutal winter we are going through now.

The question is whether we will enter another grand solar minimum just like the Maunder minimum which if history is a guide would mean a period of much colder weather winters and summers. More than a few experts with whom I speak regularly believe that we shall enter such a grand minimum along with the resulting bone-chilling weather.

If that happens, then there will be profound influences on the economy, including possible crop failures and rising energy use for home and workplace heating. Or in other words, expect bigger bills for food and energy. After a period in which the supply of both has been increasingly abundant then this change will likely come as a shock to many people and likely the broader global economy as well.

Chasing/Activating Grids

There's no awards for activating grids, but, heck , if you want you can track your grids worked and activated. If you are on ARRL LotW (free to anyone) it automatically tracks the grids you've worked and you get a monthly score, plus a listing of unique grids worked in 2018. Of course, this all goes away at the end of the calendar year.

For activations, you need to plan a bit ahead. If you are running parks on the air (where you upload an ADIF file to the WWFF database, every park is in a 'grid' and you can determine that several ways.

On the WWFF 'Map' site, you'll see the map for the US with all the sites with a clickable circle. If you click on that, it will give you the grid designator, such as EM13.

Another way is to use a site like:

<http://www.dxmaps.com/callbook/gmap.php>

Which shows grids overlaid on maps.

Now, WWFF isn't fussy – you can send /m, /p, or just your call, and folks will get credit . If you work a park, whether it is /m, /p, /3, or just the call, no sweat. WWFF doesn't discriminate. However , for LoTW, you don't want to sign /m, /p, or anything else other than your call. For LoTW, each of these requires a separate call sign 'certificate' , and if the folks you work don't upload exactly the same, there is no match and no credit. That's why you'll see N4CD send just 'de N4CD' in parks, but I'll use /m when out running counties not in parks.

Another useful site is:

<http://qthlocator.free.fr/>

Type in the grid at the bottom in the box, and it will show you the location of the grid.

A few county hunters are parks and chasing grids – KA9JAC, N9JF, AD1C, W4IHI, K0AP, and others – as well as counties and show up in the ARRL Database as well for having worked XXX number of grids.

For parks on the air, all you have to do is work them. The 'activator' uploads logs and you get credit for them. K7SEN has many many parks with credit – as to many others who work N4CD, N9JF in parks and the others often spotted on W6RK.

The easiest way to count how many grids you've activated is simply count how many 'station locations' you've set up in LoTW. (I flushed all the NPOTA ones Jan 1 as they didn't have grid info).

For me, it's a good excuse to go out and run counties – and parks. If propagation is decent, you get about twice the number of contacts – half county hunters, half park hunters. Helps these days to justify money spent on gas – with the often poor radio conditions.

Or you can just work me for the county - or anyone else – and I appreciate the contacts.

N2CX Activations

N2CX KFF activations, back to MD Mar 17

Braving the ravages of a limpid ionized gas layer, we went first to Gunpowder Falls, SP, KFF-1577 at Jerusalem village. It features the remnants of a historic settlement complete with a one time mill and, something not seen at other parks, a jousting venue! Though in a river valley, there was weak but usable 4G cell coverage. It was surprisingly busy for a cool late winter day with an abundance of cross-country hikers (and special "facilities" for them), a professional model and accompanying photographer, and even a group celebrating an engagement party - what better site for such a romantic event than

something named for bellicose activities? Wonder what they made in the mill...



The second stop was the aptly name Rocks SP, KFF-1592. It is definitely on high ground and the area visited, the Rock Ridge Picnic Area was near the top. The "best" parking spot in the lot was uniformly tree covered meaning that careful visual inspection and careful positioning was necessary to get the antenna pole up through the branches. There are numerous "rugged" trails as evidenced by signs warning "This leads to a hazardous area. This is a natural area, proceed at your own risk." Well, duh! There is a unique rock feature called King and Queen Seat which had several hardy folks climbing atop them who either had not read the signs or did not give a rip!



Radio conditions at both locations were as expected - poor! Fortunately numerous kindly hunters showed up to grace the log. 40 was the most consistent band, though QSO party QRM made frequency hopping necessary. Only a couple DX stations showed up on 20 and a Russian DX contest again made QSY a necessity. 30 proved surprising with several ON contacts and an unfortunate choppy QSO with an apparent SOTA activator, whom I copied as K7KSG/7. Not sure that the call was correct though we did exchange RSTs. The difficulty in copying was due to persistent European hunters!



20+ Q's at each spot so return visits are in order when the upper atmosphere gets its act together. Thanks to all the patient hunters (like W6LEN, VE6UX and ON7NQ) for slogging along.

Virginia QSO Party

There were two planned mobiles – W4GO and KI4FW. No report from either.

According to the VA QP site, over 206 logs were received. Only two folks had comments on the 3830 reflector or filed a score there. Most activity, as usual, was on 40 and 80m as folks tried to work other VA counties/cities. For this event, counties and Independent Cities were multipliers. Not all made it on the air.



W4GO mobile



KI4FW mobile

Seems VA has their own spotting site during the QSO Party as well.

K4BAI - fixed in GA - 30 CW 45 SSB

Sunday was fun, but 20M was too long and most signals were weak. 40M was quite good, but heard no mobiles or rovers. 80M was also good and worked two VA mobiles on SSB. Thanks for all QSOs. Look for the GA QSO Party the second full weekend in April.

73, John,
K4BAI

K0ZR/4 - fixed - Loudon VA 520 cw 307 ssb

Although the band conditions were rather poor, still managed to make a reasonable number of QSOs. First time in years I did "mixed" rather than CW exclusively.

K2PI - fixed - FAU VA - 265 cw 514 ssb

Enjoyable time. Started off with a massive cold and a completely hoarse voice, so little phone that first day. Ended up mostly on phone, pulling out of the cold. So many multipliers are not present on CW, which is a shame.

Thanks to all who worked me, despite the absolute certainty that you had "FAU" somewhere in your log by the time we did. Thanks as always to the mobiles who put so many countries on the air. Maybe, like DXpeditions, we ought to think about defraying some of their fuel costs, at the very least. Finally, thanks to SPARC for one of the very best QP's out there.

K4MI - fixed - VA - 62 cw 144 ssb

Did a bunch of mobile chasing and county hunting to get just over half of the counties/cities in the state. Handed out a bunch of new ones to many people, as there are only a couple ops in Newport News, and I am likely the only CW op from there.

WN4AFP - fixed - SC - 48 cw 48 ssb

Another challenging VAQP in the books! This is one of my favorite QPs on the planet, so this one was my focus this weekend. I enjoyed working many of my friends in VA. I didn't find any mobiles running, but I finally picked up some counties working W4GO on 80m phone. I noticed that lots of the VA stations went to 80m early on both days and at that time, 40m was starting to go long, so I took a few long breaks during the lull. Looking forward to the 2019 event!

73's

Dave WN4AFP

Global Warming Hysteria

No, the storms are not getting 'more powerful'. That's Al Gore Bulloney as is the rest of his spiel.

- - - - -

Continental United States Hurricane Landfall Frequency and Associated Damage:
Observations and Future Risks
Philip Klotzbach

While United States landfalling hurricane frequency or intensity shows no significant trend since 1900, growth in coastal population and wealth have led to increasing hurricane-related damage along the United States coastline.

Continental United States (CONUS) hurricane-related inflation-adjusted damage has increased significantly since 1900. However, since 1900 neither observed CONUS landfalling hurricane frequency nor intensity show significant trends, including the devastating 2017 season.

Two large-scale climate modes that have been noted in prior research to significantly impact CONUS landfalling hurricane activity are El Niño-Southern Oscillation on interannual timescales and the Atlantic Multi-decadal Oscillation on multi-decadal timescales. La Niña seasons tend to be characterized by more CONUS hurricane landfalls than do El Niño seasons, and positive Atlantic Multi-decadal Oscillation phases

tend to have more CONUS hurricane landfalls than do negative phases.

Growth in coastal population and regional wealth are the overwhelming drivers of observed increases in hurricane-related damage. As the population and wealth of the US has increased in coastal locations, it has invariably led to the growth in exposure and vulnerability of coastal property along the US Gulf and East Coasts. Unfortunately, the risks associated with more people and vulnerable exposure came to fruition in Texas and Florida during the 2017 season following the landfalls of hurricanes Harvey and Irma. Total economic damage from those two storms exceeded \$125 billion. Growth in coastal population and exposure is likely to continue in the future, and when hurricane landfalls do occur, this will likely lead to greater damage costs than previously seen. Such a statement is made recognizing that the vast scope of damage from hurricanes often highlight the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of building codes, flood maps, infrastructure, and insurance in at-risk communities.

<https://journals.ametsoc.org/doi/abs/10.1175/BAMS-D-17-0184.1>

Upcoming GA QSO Party

Info from KU8E:

The 58th annual Georgia QSO Party will be held the weekend of April 14th-15th I have created a Google Georgia QSO Party activity map. Thank you to NO5W for the overlay for the map that shows the county boundaries. By clicking inside the county border it will tell you the county name. Each marker is activity that's taking part in that specific county.

You can find it at

https://drive.google.com/openid=1T2GOtNMFVMyoVwD_WtQoSkJw408zdIY4&usp=sharing

Please help us fill in the missing counties by being active in the GQP. You can send me an email that you will be on or go the the planned activity page at <http://ku8e.com/GQP/GQPRegisterCounty.php> and put in your county. A

s usual we are looking for rover stations from outside-of-state to help us activate all the Georgia counties. Especially on CW.

Thanks, Jeff KU8E

Grand Canyon Activation - W0PHX

Activation Report de W0PHX

I went up to the Grand Canyon to try to redeem myself. My last activation had 7 QSOs and I don't think I knew more than 5 letters for Morse Code.

Today I set up my KX2 with 10 watts and a Packtenna random wire. I started keying away and getting some QSOs.

Next, a K3 appeared in front of me. More watts! Randy van Vliet W6RLV showed up.

I got 37 in the log today working both SSB and CW.

I heard a W6LEN come across SSB and I was speechless. I now have two of those SSB QSOs in the log from Jess Guaderrama! Don't worry I found him on 40m CW too. Good to hear you Jess and glad you're on the up!

I worked Kent O'Sell at his park today for a P2P.



I lent Randy my antenna and mast and went to town with the wife and kids and we ordered pizza.

It was a fun time meeting a ham you worked on the air and toss around hints, tips, etc.

Thank you hunters for chasing me today!

George W0PHX

Intruders in the Ham Bands

from ARRL Weekly Newsletter

The International Amateur Radio Union Region 1 (IARU-R1) Monitoring System (IARUMS) reports that one of China's over-the-horizon radar (OTHR) installations has been causing interference in the Amateur Radio 7 MHz band. The IARUMS February newsletter reports on that intruder and others.

The Chinese over-the-horizon radar signal on 40 meters. [Wolf Hadel, DK2OM, image] Other Top 5 intruders include a "single-letter beacon" transmitting either the letter "K" or the letter "T" on 7039.3 kHz. The source is believed to be in the Russian Pacific, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. A Russian F1B teleprinter signal (RDL) has appeared on 7193 kHz, with an encrypted frequency-shift-keyed (50-baud) signal, originating in Kaliningrad. Authorities in Germany and Switzerland have filed official complaints. A Russian orthogonal frequency-division multiplex OFDM 60 signal has been showing up on 14.235 MHz, covering nearly 3 kilohertz. It's said to be located in Moscow. Three Russian OFDM 60 signals were active at the same time on February 13. A Russian F1B signal has been observed on 14.308 MHz, 50 baud, 500 Hz shift, also reported to be in Moscow.

In the "miscellaneous or bad news" category, IARUMS Region 1 Coordinator Wolf Hadel, DK2OM, reports Spanish-speaking "fishermen" on 3560 kHz (USB), heard daily at 1600 UTC or later. These signals have been heard on other 80-meter frequencies. Broadcaster Radio Hargeisa in Somaliland continues to be reported on 7.120 MHz (AM) daily.

K8VOX – Julie Ann - Activation

Maybury State Park K-1518 03/23/2018 (K8VOX/W8TAM)

I had a theory that activating on Friday in the hours before the contest would be very successful if I could time it right and the bands cooperated. Sure enough, the strategy paid off! Here's a little write up for anyone interested.

I started calling CQ on 20m at 2230 and for about a half hour I managed 70 Qs, lots along the west coast from Vancouver Island to So. Cal it was awesome! At 2300 I announced I was going to QSY to 40m, N7MZW was listening and said he would like the frequency but if 40m didn't work out for me that he would give it back. My favorite kind of Op, kinder than necessary.

Then together we did pretty much non stop Qs on 40m from 2300-0000. Love the testers and their short Qs - they were warming up and seemed thrilled to have someone to chase! Now, some Ops with amps tried to bully through by not listening and calling out of turn or over the person I was trying to work but I refused to call anyone that wasn't following the DX code of conduct. I always make exceptions for very weak and QRP stations, and my POTA people :) Of course this can happen during any activation, but it was much more prevalent this evening. I'm not sure how Thom worked his piles, but I ran mine with an Iron PTT.

At 0000 they began to demand serial numbers!!! So to keep the speed up we had to just start giving them out. So there we are, contesting in WPX SSB without a plan!! The additional work to log those Qs wasn't too bad but FLE is not set up for contesting. But Thom, W8TAM, did AWESOME pushing a half hour into the contest until the splatter overtook. Hunt and pounce is definitely a tactic we would employ at this point, but without contesting software there was no fast way to tell who had already worked us. We were thrilled enough with 150 Qs on this band.

QSY to 80m and we added an additional 30 Qs in 30 min and went QRT around 0100.

I will absolutely do this again, it was a WILD thrill. I highly recommend it. Thx for the Qs!

--

We use a homebrew 80m Inverted V doublet, tuned by a vintage Johnson/Viking Matchbox I picked up at a swap. The antenna is fed by TV twin lead.

The mast is a Spiderbeam 12M (40') telescoping mast, held up by the hitch receiver on the back of our car by a flagpole holder from Amazon.



Awards Issued

USCA #1264	Sharon, W8WKD	Mar 10, 2018
USCA II #439	K5OH, Troy	Oct 19, 2017
USCA IV #170	W9DC	Jan 9, 2018
USCA VII #27	Jerry, W0GXQ	Nov 6, 2017
US-CW #155	Fred, K0FG	Feb 12, 2018
US-CW #38 US-CW II #38	K4A K4AMC	Nov 22, 2017
US-CW VII #1	W0GXQ, Jerry	Nov 6, 2017
Five Band #78	N5PR	Oct 5, 2017
Five Star #79	Tom, K7REL	Dec 14, 2017
Bingo II #101	Sharon, N0XYL	Nov 7, 2017
Bingo II #102	Ed, K8ZZ	Oct 21, 2017
Bingo III #40	Charlie, N2JNE	Mar 15, 2018
Bingo III #41	Doug, WA4UNS	Mar 15, 2108
Gemini Award #176	W0MU, Mike	
Native American #56	K7DM	Dec 22, 2017
County Challenge Lvl 9 #51	Barry, K2MF	Sept 30, 2017

Upcoming Events for County Hunters

April 7 1400z to April 8 0200z
Mississippi QSO Party CW Ph Dig
RS(T), county or SPC
www.arrlmiss.org

April 7 1400z to April 8 2000z
Missouri QSO Party CW Ph Dig
RS(T), county or SPC
www.w0ma.org

April 7 1400z to 8 2000z
Texas State Parks on the Air CW Ph Dig
RS(T), park abbreviation or SPC
www.tspota.org

Apr 7 1400z to 7 2200z
Florida State Parks on the Air CW Ph
Park ID or SPC
flspota.org/rules

April 14 1400z to 15 0200z
New Mexico QSO Party CW Ph Dig
Name, county or SPC
www.newmexicoqsoparty.org

April 14 1800z to 15 1800z
North Dakota QSO Party CW Ph Dig
RS(T), county or SPC
www.kg0yl.net/QSO.html

April 14 1800z to 15 2359z
Georgia QSO Party CW Ph Dig
RS(T), county or SPC
www.georgiaqsoparty.org

April 21 1300z to 22 2200z
Nebraska QSO Party CW Ph Dig
RS(T), county or SPC
qcwa.org/chapter025.htm

April 21 1600z to 22 0400z
Michigan QSO Party CW Ph
Serial, county or SPC
www.miqp.org/Rules.htm

April 28 1600z to 29 2159z
Florida QSO Party CW Ph
RS(T), county or SPC
floridaqsoparty.org/rules

Date for 2018 **MICHIGAN MINI** is April 26 – 27 & 28th.. It will be held at the Holiday Day Inn West Bay Beach Resort again in 2018 with room rates of: \$93.96 plus tax per night if reserved by March 25th, 2018.

West Bay Beach – Holiday Inn Resort 615 East Front Street • Traverse City, Michigan 49686 Phone: (231) 947-3700 • Fax: (231) 947-0361 Toll Free: (800) 888-8020)

You can reserve on line right now...info on the marac.org web page. Ed, K8ZZ and W8TVT, Joe, would appreciate folks registering early to help defray the necessary expenses involved in putting this event on each year.

Dayton Hamvention – at Greene County Fairgrounds – Xenia OH May 18-20

Hamcom Dallas Hamfest June 8 –9

That's all folks !

73

