

April 2018
Vol. 43, #4

Washington Amateur Communications Inc.



A 501-C3 Tax Exempt Organization



Marianna Canoe Race Coming Up!

28 April 2018

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Learn Low-Power HF CW
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DX Feature of the Month
St. Brandon Is., pp. 11-12



Rare Wake Island Grid
to Activate

P. 14



WACOM
President's Message
April 2018



Joe—N3XE

President's Message, April 2018

The weather is improving, slightly, and with warmer temperatures comes outdoor activities. Now is the time to evaluate and repair your antennas before the leaves return to the trees.

WACOM has some public service work coming up this month with the Marianna Canoe Race on the 28th. We always need several volunteers for this event and it is a great opportunity to get some hands-on experience with the 92-2 Command Truck.

Field Day is fast approaching as well so start thinking about whether you want to operate, setup a station, or just socialize and enjoy the yearly circus.

73,

Joe, N3XE

WACOM OFFICERS, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, STAFF, REPEATERS, AND NETS!

Washington Amateur Communications is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to advancing the principles of Amateur Radio while making it fun for all who participate. We have been affiliated with the ARRL for over 25 years. Our club call sign is WA3COM. Because of our activity in promoting Amateur Radio, including conducting classes, public demonstrations, emergency preparedness and training, studying technical advancements in radio and mentoring of new and soon-to-be hams, WACOM has earned the designation of Special Service Club from the ARRL.

Membership

- WACOM membership is open to anyone
- Annual Dues:
 - \$20 for individuals
 - \$10 for each additional family member
 (send check & completed form to club treasurer)
- Questions? Contact the WACOM club treasurer.

Membership Meeting

- 7:30PM (1930 hrs), First Thursday of every month

Board of Directors Meeting

- 7PM (1900 hrs), Last Thursday of every month

Mailing Address

WACOM
c/o Norma Plants N3YJY
236 Chambers Ridge Road
West Alexander, Pa 15376-2270

E-Mail

General Club Correspondence: wa3com@gmail.com

2017 Club Officers

Joe Caldwell, N3XE; joe@n3xe.com
 Vice President: Patrick Degnan Jr., KB3TFN; pdegnan@gmail.com
 Secretary: Randy Kief, KC3EKZ; randykief@comcast.net
 Treasurer: Kathleen Briggs, KC3HBO; johnw104@comcast.net

2017 Board of Directors

Director: Bob Fischer, KC3AJM; kc3ajm@outlook.com
 Director: Dennis Presky, K3PSP; dpresky@mra1.com
 Director: Rob Balogh, KB3ZUS; robertbalogh@gmail.com

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Radio Room Committee

Patrick Degnan Jr., KB3TFN; pdegnan@gmail.com

EMCOMM Training Officer

Brad McCarrell, KC3EDQ; brad_ml@verizon.net

Repeaters

K3PSP - 146.790+ MHz, EchoLink node - WA3COM-R
 147.285+ MHz (Scenery Hill, PA)
 145.250 - MHz (West Alexander)
 147.390+ MHz (Smith Township)
 147.315+ MHz (Greene County)
W3CYO - 145.490 MHz, 224.4 MHz, 443.300 MH z

Digital Net

- Mondays at 8PM (2000 hrs), on K3PSP Repeater
- Bob, KC3AJM Net Control

2 Meter Public Service Net

- Tuesdays at 8:30 PM (2030 hrs), on K3PSP Repeater

10 Meter Net

- Tuesdays at 9:30 PM (2130 hrs), on 28.340 MHz
- Bud, N3TIR Net Control

YL Net

- Wednesdays at 7:30 PM (1930 hrs), on K3PSP Repeater
- Karen, K3PUP Net Control

Elmer Net

- Wednesdays at 8 PM (2000 hrs), on K3PSP Repeater
- Bud N3TIR, Net Control

Club Elmers

DX Contest - Bill Sheehan, KB3LIX; kb3lix@comcast.net
QSL & DX - Bill Steffey, NY9H; ny9h@arrl.net
ARES & RACES - Bob Ketzell, KB3IN; kb3in@yahoo.com
CW - Loren McCullough, WA3WZR; lorenmcc@verizon.net
VHF - Craig Yoho, KB3RHR; craigyoho@consolenergy.com
Repeaters - Dennis Presky, K3PSP; dpresky@mra1.com
Websites - Joe Caldwell, N3XE; n3xe.radio@gmail.com
Elmer Net - Bud Plants, N3TIR; n3tir@arrl.net





WACOM General Meeting Minutes

1 March 2018, 7:30 PM



- Meeting began at 7:30 PM with WACOM vice president—Patrick Degnan Jr., KB3TFN
- February meeting minutes were read and accepted
- The Treasurer's report was read and accepted
- The Radio Room: Mondays are on hold due to the Technician Class being conducted there.
- There will be a Traffic Handling Class on 10 Mar 18 @ 10AM
- The last Saturday in April (28 April 18) is the Marianna Canoe Race
- Repeaters: Dennis (K3PSP) is in Florida. Brad (KC2EDQ) is working with Dennis to curb malicious DTMF—should be resolved
- Amazon Smiles: \$6400 made so far
- WACOM dues are due for 2018
- The Pittsburgh Marathon is on 6 May 18—need volunteers to help
- Technician Class: first class went well
- 5 Mar 18: There will be an open book VE class at 6PM
- Hamfest: Bud (N3TIR) stated that they got a spot at the ICEOPLEX in Southpointe—the cost is the same as the Washington Fairgrounds (they will set up and tear down for us) and we have three additional rooms. No drive-in unloading—signed a 5-year contract
- There will be a raffle for an IC-7300—based on the June 23rd daily number draw (only 250 tickets)
- The meeting adjourned and was officially over at 8:05 PM

Next Regular WACOM Meeting - Thursday, 5 April 18 at 7:30 PM!



WACOM Board Meeting Minutes

29 March 2018, 7:00 PM



Board meeting 3/29/18

Called to order 7pm – KC3AJM

Minutes(N3XE), and treasure report(KC3HBO) read, and approved – KC3HBO/KC3EKZ/N3XE/KB3TFN

OLD

Red cross events April 14th. Participants will need region 13 ID's. Unknown if we will be used or not.

Install cameras in radio room – tabled to next meeting

Hamfest location moved to ICEOPLEX approved for \$1645/yr at 5 years and \$500 deposit.

Tickets for IC-7300 are ready for sale.

Norma and Joe appointed to audit books.

NEW

Emergency Meeting about radio room & fire hall – lease good to 1st of December 2018. After meeting with fire department. Use of upstairs would be on an hourly rent basis. Amount to be determined in future meeting with fire department.

One of the web domains is about to expire. Aprox. \$100-200. renew? Motion to renew N3XE, 2nd by K3PSP – passed.

Canoe race April 28th. Request 92-2 to Dennis (K3PSP) from Brad (KC3EDQ)

Need to sell 50 raffle tickets/month to sell all of them by hamfest. Mention tickets during nets.

Kay (KC3HBO) contacted hotels in Southpointe. Holiday Inn express is reserving 25 rooms at \$125/night. Must reserve by October 4th to lock in special rate.

Need to vet region 13 badge holders, and also a photo ID for club members. - K3PSP

Club photo id's can be made in house, the current core 92-2 members will vet new members for region 13 id's. Brad will handle both ID issues – motion by N3XE, 2nd KC3HBO – passed

Kay (KC3HBO) looking for hamfest promo item ideas. Pens, bags, etc. Motion Kay get ideas and costs to be presented to the board – KC3EKZ, 2nd by KB3TFN.

2018 WACOM Upcoming Events Calendar

Meetings, Contests & Other Significant Club Events (Subject to Change)

Thu, 5 Apr 2018, WACOM Meeting at 7:30PM, Washington County Building

8 Apr 18—2-Rivers ARC Hamfest, <http://www.trarc.net>

Thu, 3 May 2018, WACOM Meeting at 7:30PM, Washington County Building

18-20 May 18—**DAYTON ARA HAMVENTION®**, Green County Fairground, Xenia, OH

26-27 May 18— CQ WPX Contest –CW, <http://cqwpix.com>

2-3 Jun 18—Breezeshooter's Hamfest, <http://breezeshooters.org>

Thu, 7 Jun 2018, WACOM Meeting at 7:30PM, Washington County Building

9-11 Jun 18—ARRL June VHF Contest, <http://www.arrl.org>

23-24 Jun 18—ARRL Field Day; North Strabane Park

Thu, 5 Jul 2018, WACOM Meeting at 7:30PM, Washington County Building

21-22 Jul 18—CQ World Wide VHF Contest (6 & 2m), <http://www.cqww-vhf.com>

13-14 Oct 18—**Pennsylvania QSO Party**, <http://www.nittany-arc.net/pqppdf/paqso17rules.pdf>







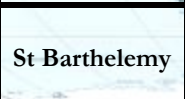

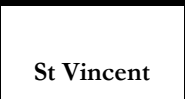




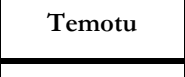
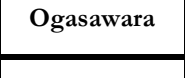

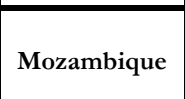
WACOM HAM DX CORNER—APRIL 2018

COURTESY: <http://www.ng3k.com/Misc/adxo.html>

2018 Apr 01	2018 Apr 09	Cape Verde Is	D4IA	LotW	DXW.Net 20180328	By CT1IUA fm Sal I (IOTA AF-086); HF; mainly CW; QSL also OK via CT1IUA
2018 Apr 01	2018 Apr 28	Canary Is	EA8	DJ9BN	TDDX 20180315	By DJ9BN as EA8/DJ9BN; 40-10m; mainly CW; 100w; dipoles; QSL OK via DARC Buro or direct
2018 Apr 01	2018 Apr 30	Wake I	KH9	LotW	TDDX 20180315	By N7NVK as KH9/N7NVK; QRP; Buddipole, G5RV; exact begin date not specified; will continue for 3 months, then a month off
2018 Apr 02	2018 Apr 13	Gambia	C5WP	ON7WP Direct	DXNews 20180403	By ON7WP fm IK23jr; HF; mainly FT8; QSL: Pedro M.J. Wyns, Moutstraat 7, B-
2018 Apr 04	2018 Apr 11	Bhutan	A5A	JH1AJT Direct	TDDX 20180330	By JH1AJT JF1IST E21EIC; 160-6m; CW SSB FT8, emphasis on FT8; QSL also OK via Club Log; QSL direct: JH1AJT, PO Box 8, Oiso, Naka-gun, Kanagawa 259-0111, Japan
2018 Apr 05	2018 Apr 17	Agalega & St Brandon	3B7A	LotW	OPDX 20170911	By F5UFX F5CWU F4BKV F4FET F2DX F5PTM F4HAU F8ATM fm St Brandon I (IOTA AF-015); 160-6m; CW SSB RTTY; 7 stns; QSL also OK via F5CWU
2018 Apr 07	2018 Apr 14	Liechtenstein	HB0	PE1FLO	DXMB 20180402	By PA2HGJ PA2RDK PA3CNO PA3DRF PE0MGB PE1FLO as HB0/homecall fm JN47sc; 160-10m;
2018 Apr 08	2018 Apr 15	Tuvalu	T2AR	LotW	DXW.Net 20180210	By 3D2AG fm Funafuti Atoll (IOTA OC-015); HF + 6 2m; SSB CW RTTY JT65 FT8; mostly 0430-1300z and 1730-2000z; QSL also OK via 3D2AG and eQSL
2018 Apr 09	2018 Apr 18	Australia	VK9	Club Log	VK5MAV 20180220	By VK5MAV as VK5MAV/9 fm Cato Reef (IOTA OC-265); 40m GP, 20m VDA; activated once before 20+ yrs ago; QSL also OK via RN3RQ (VK via VK5MAV direct)
2018 Apr 13	2018 Apr 19	Palau	T88UW	LotW	TDDX 20171127	By JH7IPR; 160-6m; CW SSB RTTY FT8 JT9 JT65; 500w; yagi, wires
2018 Apr 14	2018 Apr 28	Canary Is	EA8	DG5LAC Buro	DG5LAC 20180403	By DG5LAC as EA8/DG5LAC fm Fuerteventura I (IOTA AF-004, WWFF EAFF-0063); SSB FT8; QSL also OK via Club Log
2018 Apr 15	2018 Apr 20	South Cook Is	E51BCP	KD7WPJ	UR5BCP 20180213	By UR5BCP fm Rarotonga I; 40-6m; CW SSB FM + digital; dipoles, verticals; SOTA activations

COURTESY: <http://www.ng3k.com/Misc/adxo.html>

Political Map of the World, September 2008

2018 Apr15	2018 Apr22	 Kosovo	Z66D	LotW	DXW.Net 20180227	By OK team; SSB CW RTTY FT8; QSL also OK via OK6DJ, Club Log, eQSL
2018 Apr15	2018 Apr28	 Senegal	6W	DC4CQ	CPDX 20180312	By DC4CQ as 6W/DC4CQ; 40-15m; SSB + digital (incl FT8); 100w; dipole, mag loop; spare time operation
2018 Apr17	2018 Apr24	 East Kiribati	T32AZ	KH6QJ	TDDX 20180307	By KH6QJ fm Christmas I (IOTA OC-024); QRV for the Worked All Provinces China (WAPC) Contest; QSL OK via Buro or direct
2018 Apr17	2018 Apr25	 Palau	T8	Home Call	TDDX 20171204	By JA7WFT as T88FT and J16IHG as T88IH; 160-6m; CW SSB JT65 JT9
2018 Apr17	2018 Apr29	 Vanuatu	YJ0AG	M0OXO	TDDX 20180110	By VK5GR fm Efate (IOTA OC-035); 80-10m; SSB RTTY FT8 PSK Olivia; Hexbeam, vertical; call sign requested
2018 Apr18	2018 Apr24	 Micronesia	V63DX	LotW	JA7HMZ 20180403	By JA7HMZ fm Pohnpei (IOTA OC-010, QJ96cx); focus on 160m for Europe and FT8; QSL also OK via JA7HMZ direct
2018 Apr18	2018 Apr27	 St Barthelemy	FJ	Home Call	DXW.Net 20171017	By AI5P N0KV W0ZA WD0E as FJ/AI5P and FJ/N0KV; 80-10m; CW SSB RTTY + satellite; FJ/N0KV OK via LotW
2018 Apr20	2018 Apr27	 Nepal	9N7WA	R4WAA	DXW.Net 20180328	By R4WAA; HF; CW + digital
2018 Apr21	2018 Apr29	 St Vincent	J88PI	GW4DVB Direct	DXNews 20180326	By GW4DVB fm Palm I, Grenadines (IOTA NA-025, FK92ho); 40-6m; SSB; QSL: Brian Price, PO Box 20:20, Llanharan - Pontyclun. CF72 9ZA, Wales, UK
2018 Apr22	2018 Apr25	 Solomon Is	H44R	See Web	425DXN 20180120	By DL2GAC VE3LYC fm Mbanika I (IOTA OC-168); 40-17m; CW SSB; 2 stations
2018 Apr23	2018 May05	 St Kitts & Nevis	V47CDC	W1CDC	TDDX 20180327	By W1CDC; 80-10m; CW
2018 Apr24	2018 Apr28	 Liechtenstein	HB0	LotW	TDDX 20171222	By DL1AWD as HB0/DL1AWD and DL6JF as HB0/DL6JF; HF; CW; holiday style operation; QSL also OK via home_call (direct or DARC Buro)
2018 Apr27	2018 May04	 Market Reef	OJ0W	OH3WS	OH3WS 20180323	By OH3WS; mainly CW, perhaps SSB; spare time operation; QSL OK via Buro or direct
2018 Apr29	2018 May03	 Temotu	H40D	See Web	425DXN 20171215	By VE3LYC fm Taumako I (IOTA OC-179); 40-10m; CW SSB; QSL also OK via Club Log
2018 Apr29	2018 May04	 Ogasawara	JD1BMH	JD1BMH Buro	DXNews 20180401	By JG7PSJ fm Chichijima I (IOTA AS-031); 40-10m; CW SSB RTTY; QSL also OK via JG7PSJ direct
2018 Apr29	2018 May05	 Bhutan	A52	See Info	TDDX 20180306	By JH3AEF as A52AEF, JA3IVU as A52IVU, and JR3MVF + WA0WOF as A52YL; 80-6m; SSB CW + digital; QSL A52AEF and A52IVU via home_call, A52YL via WA0WOF
2018 Apr29	2018 May05	 Mozambique	C96RRC	R7AL	TDDX 20180102	By R7AL RA1ZZ RZ3K RK8A fm Inhaca I (IOTA AF-088, KG63lx); 40-10m; CW SSB + digital; verticals; QSL also OK via Club Log

WACOM DX Feature of the Month— 3B7A

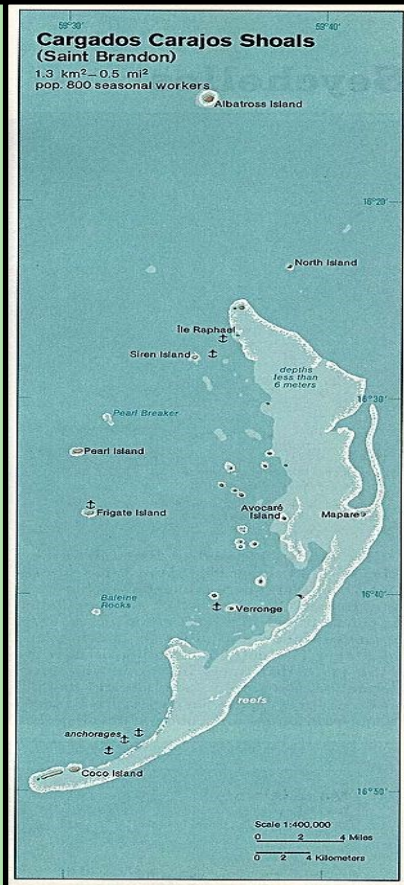
St. Brandon Island (5—17 April 2018)

Saint Brandon, also known as the **Cargados Carajos Shoals**, is an Indian Ocean archipelago about 270 mile south-east of Mauritius consisting of a number of sand banks, shoals and islets. Saint Brandon consists of five island groups, with about 28–40 islands and islets in total, depending on seasonal storms and related sand movements. There are 22 named islands and shoals. The archipelago is low-lying and is prone to substantial submersion in severe weather. It has an aggregate land area estimated variously at 1/2 sq mi and 500 acres. Economic activity in the region is limited to fishing on the very extensive shallow bank covering approximately 900 sq miles

around the islands. By the early 19th century, most of the islands were in use as fishing stations. Geographically, the archipelago is part of the Mascarene Islands and is situated on the Mascarene Plateau formed by the separation of the Mauritia microcontinent during the separation of India and Madagascar about 60 million years ago.

Politically, Saint Brandon is part of the territory of Mauritius and is grouped within the Outer Islands of Mauritius along with Agaléga, Tromelin (sovereignty disputed with France) and the Chagos Archipelago (sovereignty disputed with Britain), including Diego Garcia. The Outer Islands are defined as "all the islands comprised in the State of Mauritius other than the Islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues". They are administered from Port Louis by the Outer Island Development Corporation (OIDC), which is responsible for their management and development and reports to the prime minister's office. Under a judgment by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council on 30 July 2008, 13 of the outer islands were deemed to have been a permanent grant to the Raphael Fishing Company Ltd.

The reef measures more than 31 miles from north to south, and is 3.1 miles wide, cut by three passes. The reef area is 73 sq miles. The islands have a small transient population, mostly fishermen, counted at 63 people on census night in



2001. The bulk of this transitory population, approximately 40 people, live on Île Raphael, with smaller settlements existing on Avocaré, Coco, and Île du Sud. A settlement on Albatross Island was abandoned in 1988. The islands are rich in marine flora and fauna,^[8] but on some islands the latter have been severely affected by the uncontrolled presence of rats.

Geography

In the past, Cargados Carajos was a large, volcanic island (part of the Mascarenes, caused by the Réunion hotspot). Over time however, the island eroded until it became submerged and a coral atoll was left behind. The archipelago is part of the Mascarene plateau, a submarine plateau north and east of Madagascar that is the second largest in the Indian Ocean after the Kerguelen Plateau. A number of unnamed islands and sand cays complete the Cargados. The total number of islands on the reef is close to 40.

Siren Island, Île du Sud, Pearl Island (Île Perle), and Frigate Island (Île Frégate) are west of the reef, while North Island (Île du Nord) is about 4 kilometres (2.5 mi) north-east of the northern tip of the reef.

Albatross Island, about 18 kilometres (11 mi) north, is geographically a separate single coral island at location 16°15'S, 59°35'E.

Albatross Island is the highest (its highest point is 6 m (20 ft) above sea level) and the largest of the islands in the group, with an area of 0.39 sq miles followed by Raphael, Tortue, Avocaré, Coco Island and Île du Sud.

The main settlement is on Île Raphael, which is held by the Raphael Fishing Company together with twelve other islands (l'île du Sud (or l'île Boisées), Petit Fou, l'Avocaire, l'île aux Fous (Fous, Ile Fou), l'île du Gouvernement, Petit Mapou, Grand Mapou, La Baleine, l'île aux Cocos, Veronige, l'île aux Bois and Baleines Rocks) under a permanent lease.^[9] Île Raphael can have up to 35 resident employees and a coast guard and meteorological station (with eight residents in 1996). Smaller settlements exist on Avocaré, Coco, and Sud; the settlement on Albatross was abandoned in 1988.

SOURCE: WIKIPEDIA



WACOM DX Feature of the Month— 3B7A (Con't)

St. Brandon Island (5—17 April 2018)

History

The atoll was probably discovered in 975 A.D. by Arabian sailors along with Dina Arobi ("Abandoned Island" - Mauritius) and may be referred to as "Baixos" on the 1502 Cantino Planisphere. It was named in 1506 by Portuguese sailors who put ashore for provisioning on their way to India. Pirates have used the islands as a refuge. In 1598, the Dutch occupied the islands. Mauritius and its associated islands were colonised by the French in about 1715, granted by the King of France to the Compagnie des Indes in 1726 but retroceded to the French Crown in 1765. In the book "The history of Mauritius, or the Isle of France, and the neighbouring islands; from their first discovery to the present time" by Charles Grant, the author quotes from his father's papers that "The bank of Corgados Garayos was, in 1742, the first object of the researches made by the boat named the Charles, and the tartan the Elizabeth, dispatched from the Isle of France (Mauritius) by order of M. Mahe de la Bourdonnais, at that time Governor of it. These two vessels having made it on the 27th of August, anchored there, and traced a plan of it, by which it is represented in the form of an horse-shoe, and of six leagues in extent, running north-north-east and south-west. These two boats not having been on the north side, and, consequently, not having perceived the isles which lay off it, its small extent, and the affinity of its latitude and longitude with that of Saint Brandon, on which an English vessel, called the Hawk, (le Faucon) was stranded on her return from Surat to Europe, induced me to consider it as one and the same shoal"

Saint Brandon was referred to as 'Cargados' in Samuel Dunn's world map of 1794. In 1806 Napoleon ordered the proclamation of the Civil Code as the Law of Mauritius and its islands. When, in 1810, Mauritius and its islands were taken by force of arms by Britain, the articles of capitulation confirmed to the inhabitants, in accordance with British constitutional practice, the continuance of their own laws, i.e. the Code Napoleon as it then stood.

The islands became part of a British Crown Colony in 1810.

The most common employment on St. Brandon in 1922 was agriculture, with a manager, assistant manager and 11 laborers. Only two young men were recorded as



working as fishermen. Three men worked as carpenters, one as a mason, one as a shoemaker and another as a domestic servant. There was no indication that the guano mines were operating.

In 1925 the liquidators of the St Brandon Company sold the right to the permanent lease to France Ulcoq who sold it in 1928 to the Raphael Fishing Co Ltd ("Raphael Fishing").

Mauritius, and its islands, became an independent state within the Commonwealth in 1968 and a republic in 1992. .

In 2011, The Ministry of Environment & Sustainable Development issued the "Mauritius Environment Outlook Report" which stated that "For the Outer Islands of ... St. Brandon, major improvements are required to promote development, environmental protection and judicious use of natural resources."



Technician Licensees – Why Not Try Low Power HF CW?

Ron Stone, KA3J (Courtesy eHAM)

Would you like to contact hams around the world using a simple antenna and a radio that isn't much larger or more costly than a VHF/UHF handheld? If you're willing to invest a modest amount of time to develop some new skills, consider using low power HF CW. What follows will prepare you for a successful introduction into this exciting facet of ham radio.

Why Learn CW?

Simply put, CW is a highly effective, engaging and elegantly simple mode. Relative to phone (SSB), CW can provide a 12-17 dB advantage – that's 2-3 S units! This means that a 5 watt CW radio can be as effective as a 100 watt SSB radio. While some digital modes (e.g., PSK31, JT65) are even more effective, a computer must handle encoding, transmission and decoding. This adds some cost and complexity and removes you a bit from the action. With CW, you handle the encoding and decoding which also enhances your sense of accomplishment. Plus, CW is conversational like phone and you're likely to enjoy the camaraderie that CW operators share.

CW's unique and rewarding user experience has resulted in its continued popularity. A quick tune across the bands will confirm this. Or, take a look at contest statistics. During the 2013 Field Day, CW provided 42% of the total QSOs, phone – 54% and digital – 4%. Similarly, during the 2012 Sweepstakes there were 500,739 CW QSOs and about 575,000 phone QSOs.

Is CW Difficult to Learn?

An eHam survey indicated that about 80% of hams could learn it without too much trouble and most either found it easy (16%) or challenging but fun (47%).

To find out how it would be for you, spend an hour or two using one of the excellent, free training programs. These programs can be found on lcwo.net, justlearnmorsecode.com, G4FON.net, and on other websites. If you enjoy the first few lessons, continue. Even if you find it a bit tough, keep one thing in mind. Some hams who struggled learning CW or even hated it initially now love it and use it almost exclusively.

Will Learning CW Require a Lot of Time?

The Navy's former training course required 80 hours to achieve a fairly high level of proficiency (18 WPM) and included learning to type. The time you'll need to become sufficiently proficient to get on the air will likely be somewhere between 40-60 hours. This is probably just a small fraction of the time you spend on the hobby in one year.

What's the Best Method for Learning CW?

You'll find a variety of theories and gimmicks on the Internet about how to best learn CW. In the end, it all comes down to learning the sound of about 40 characters (letters, numbers, and punctuation) and a few special symbols. The Koch method in combination with Farnsworth timing, which is incorporated into the training programs mentioned above, is a widely accepted approach. To begin, try to practice about a half-hour every day. You'll learn one new character at a time and your initial character speed should be no less than 15 WPM. You can set the Farnsworth timing to increase your character and word spacing to reduce your effective speed to perhaps initially 6-8 WPM. This approach forces your brain to focus on the sound of each character rather than individual dits and dahs while providing you time to recognize and record each character. After you achieve at least 90% accuracy with a new character, you should adjust the Farnsworth timing to increase your effective speed. You can begin practicing sending at any time.

Does Low Power (QRP) Offer Significant Benefits?

While QRP (5 watts or less) won't appeal to everyone, an eHam survey indicated that about 50% of hams use QRP at least part of the time. You may want to consider using it for one or more of the following reasons:

It can substantially reduce the cost of your station.

A new entry-level 100 watt HF multi-band, multi-mode transceiver with power supply will cost at least \$700 - \$800 (e.g., Icom 718, Yaesu FT-857) while a decent used radio and power supply will cost at least \$400. QRP single-band crystal controlled transceiver kits start as low as \$40

Technician Licensees – Why Not Try Low Power HF CW?

Ron Stone, KA3J (Courtesy eHAM)

(e.g., RockMite – qrpme.com) or around \$100 for a single-band radio kit that is tunable (e.g., MFJ 9340K, TenTec 1340).

A new, assembled single-band QRP radio will cost \$150 (e.g., MFJ 9340W) or \$200 for a multi-band radio (e.g., TenTec 506 Rebel). A small power supply or set of rechargeable batteries with charger will run about \$40.

You'll also need to spend about \$70 for coax, wire, rope, connectors, and homemade insulators to build a simple antenna like a dipole. Some portable antennas will cost a lot less because little or no coax is needed. In addition, you'll need a paddle or straight key that will cost at least \$30 - \$50 (see electronicsusa.com, vizkey.com) unless you build your own. For example, my almost no-cost "paddle" consists of two momentary tactile switches mounted on my handheld radio or on a prototype board.

You can find many other equipment choices and learn about their strengths and weaknesses in the eHam product reviews.

It facilitates operating portable.

QRP is quite popular for portable operation because the equipment is very small, light and energy efficient. In fact, many hams use QRP just for this purpose. For example, I use my homebrew 1 watt 20 meter handheld radio with an 8 foot whip antenna at my favorite beach in Florida. This past winter, I operated about 45-60 minutes per day on 82 days, had 222 QSOs and worked 34 states and 47 countries including Australia 7 times.

It may provide a more thrilling experience.

This is the key factor that may drive your interest in QRP. After using typical 100 watt radios for 28 years, I needed a new challenge and decided to homebrew a radio. I built a very simple 2 watt, 40 meter QRP transceiver that I used with a dipole up 50 feet. My initial low expectations quickly vanished as I casually worked all states and 86 countries while having many fine rag chews. I almost always made a contact within 15 minutes of turning the radio on.

QRP brought back the magic of radio for me and made operating exciting again. Now, 18 years later, it still amazes me that I can often communicate over thousands of miles with a simple anten-

na and a radio that fits in my pocket or hand. Every QSO feels special especially when I'm using a radio I built. This feeling is magnified when I operate portable, work a rare station in a pile-up, have a great rag chew, or work other QRPers.

So if you really enjoy developing your skills and seeing what you can accomplish with minimal gear, QRP may be for you.

Can a Beginner be Successful with Low Power?

Many hams, including QRP enthusiasts will tell you "no". The concern is that a beginner will have difficulty making contacts and quickly become frustrated. However, this will not occur if you adopt the right attitude and approach.

AK4YH discusses his approach and success in his eHam article: Starting Ham Radio, The Road Less Taken. It is interesting to note that entry level HF licensees are required to use low power (10 watts) in some countries, including England, Japan, and Australia. Here are some suggestions that will help ensure your success.

Adopt Reasonable Expectations

Be mindful that your signal will be at least 13 dB (about 2 S units) weaker than many. This means:

- You will not be able to contact every station that you hear
- Your CQs will not usually be answered quickly.
- You will need to be very patient and may not always be successful when trying to work a rare station in a pile-up.
- When conditions are poor or a particular propagation path is marginal, a contact may only be possible due to the more capable station and trained ears on the other end.

Use 40 or 20 Meters and Operate when Conditions are Most Favorable

The most popular bands for QRP are 40 and 20 meters because they have the most activity, good propagation throughout the solar cycle, and reasonable antenna size. To operate on 20 meters, you'll need to upgrade to General which only requires about 10 hours of studying (source: hamradiolicenseexam.com).

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This is well worth the time because 20 meters is great for day-time DX and portable operation. Also, a 20 meter antenna can be half the size of a 40 meter antenna and be equally effective at half the height. The upgrade will also give you access to other bands that are good for QRP.

It's best to operate when there is plenty of activity on the band and when propagation can best support a QRP signal. I've had good success on both 40 and 20 meters during late afternoon and early evening and on 40 meters well into the night.

You'll need to determine what times work best for you in your area. Use reversebeacon.net to find out where and how well you're being heard at any time. Even with very low power (< 1 watt), you'll often be heard at least at one distant reverse beacon location.

Put Up a Good Antenna At Home or Go Portable

A simple center fed dipole probably offers the biggest bang for the buck if you can support it reasonably high, preferably 35 feet or more for 40 meters. Other options include an end fed half-wave dipole, a random wire with a tuner, or a vertical with a good set of radials, to mention a few. Some options may cost a bit more but offer multi-band capability.

If you can't put up a decent antenna at home, try operating portable. Ideally, select a nice electrically quiet location like a beach, park or mountain top. At these locations, QRPers have good success using a shortened vertical with a counterpoise, or a random wire or other end fed antenna thrown up in a tree or supported with a collapsible fishing pole.

Use Search and Pounce or Call CQ

The quickest way to make a contact is to search for stations calling CQ or that are just ending a QSO. As you tune, listen for stations with loud signals and minimal fading as they will likely hear you best. Also, be aware of weaker, low power stations near the QRP frequencies (e.g., 7.030 MHz, 7.040 MHz, 14.060 MHz) that are likely to hear you too. Search and pounce will work best if you can copy stations at their speed – typically, 15 – 20 WPM. If you can't, when you respond to a CQ ask the station to please slow

down (PSE QRS) as follows using your call sign (e.g., W3XYZ): PSE QRS DE W3XYZ W3XYZ K. You'll recognize that a QSO is ending if you can copy a common ending phrase like 73, cuagn (see you again), or cul (see you later). Then try to copy at least the station's prefix (e.g., W5, KA3, etc.) and call as follows: KA3? KA3? DE W3XYZ W3XYZ PSE QRS K.

If your speed is initially much slower than most stations, or if you're using a crystal controlled radio, you'll need to rely more heavily on calling CQ. This works fine but it may sometimes take twice as long, perhaps 30 minutes or more, to make a contact. Using a keyer that can send CQ automatically can reduce the effort. Try operating on or near the QRP frequencies, listen for activity first and then send QRL to make sure the frequency isn't in use before calling CQ.

Ask for Help When Needed

You can receive helpful guidance and encouragement and get questions answered on various QRP-related forums located on eHam, Yahoo Groups, and on QRP-L as well as from QRP organizations such as QRP ARCI, Four State QRP Group, NorCal QRP Club, and others. There are also a variety of helpful CW-oriented clubs including the Straight Key Century Club, Fists CW Club, CW Operators Club, and others. Local ham club members and the hams you contact on the air can also provide assistance. Ideally, try to find a mentor in your area who can show you that operating QRP isn't difficult and can help you get your station on the air.

Conclusion

If you can be patient while developing your operating skills, low power HF CW can provide a very rewarding experience. You may be amazed to discover what can be accomplished with very simple gear. Low power CW can provide a low-cost entry into HF for Technician licensees and can be enjoyed by others as well.

So are you ready to begin your low power HF CW adventure?



Z60A Activity to Mark Kosovo's New DXCC Status Logs Nearly 100,000 Contacts

03/14/2018

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 week.

Wake Island Operation to Make Rare Grid Available

03/20/2018

Starting in April, Philip Gairson, N7NVK, will begin working on Wake Island, which is in grid RK39 for those participating in the 2018 ARRL International Grid Chase (IGC). His schedule calls for 3 months on the island, and then 1 month off — a pattern that will repeat over the course of about a year. Wake is 12 hours ahead of UTC.

Gairson does not yet know what days or times he will be on the air, but he plans to post his availability on his [QRZ.com profile page](#) and notify ARRL to include it in its DX bulletin. Contacting him could prove challenging. He's taking along an Elecraft KX3 along with a G5RV or Buddipole for an antenna, running low power. He will operate split, and he asks for patience because he's not used to being the focus of a pileup. Internet connectivity on Wake will be limited, but he plans to use LoTW. — *Thanks to The Daily DX*

FCC Seizes Equipment from Pirate Broadcasters in Boston

03/30/2018

The FCC reports that it seized transmission equipment from two pirate radio stations in Boston on March 26. According to court documents, the seizures involved an illegal broadcaster that identified as "Big City" on various FM channels from Dorchester, Massachusetts (with a studio in Roxbury) and pirate "B87.7 FM," which operated on 87.7 FM from Dorchester. Both unlicensed stations had been issued multiple warnings but continued to operate. Pursuant to federal forfeiture statutes, authorities seized equipment operated by each radio station. The forfeiture actions came in the wake of complaints to the FCC — including one from a licensed broadcaster — about interference, the FCC said.

"When pirate radio stations refuse to cease operations, despite multiple warnings, action must be taken," US Attorney Andrew E. Lelling said. "It is a public safety hazard for illegal radio stations to broadcast, potentially interfering with critical radio communications. We will work in conjunction with the FCC's Enforcement Bureau to identify violators of federal communications law." Over past year, the FCC has significantly ramped up its enforcement activity against unlicensed broadcasters, netting at least two Amateur Radio licensees alleged to be involved in pirate broadcasting.

Enforcement Bureau Chief Rosemary Harold said the FCC has been "pursuing multiple legal routes to stop pirate broadcasters," and that the seizure action in Boston is just one of them. The Communications Act of 1934 prohibits the operation of radio broadcasting equipment above certain low-intensity thresholds (under FCC Part 15) without an FCC license. The Act authorizes the seizure and forfeiture of any electronic or radio frequency equipment used to broadcast without an FCC license.

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