

How's DX?

DXpeditions During Solar Minimum

Enrico Giannerini, IZ5CML, recently made a blog post on **hamradioweb.org** asking (in Italian), “Is it worth planning great DXpeditions during the solar minimum?” Over time, the question has been asked by many DXers around the globe. Many have said no, pointing out that we are in the bottom of the sunspot cycle. DXpeditioners indicate we got the license, permit, or approval to do so, and we must go now. Being a DX editor, I obviously have a bias toward going when you can and not worrying about the sunspot cycle.

Granted, we all know when going on a DXpedition at the bottom of the sunspot cycle that it will be difficult, but not impossible, to work the higher bands (10, 12, and sometimes 15 meters). Serious DXers should never limit themselves to only one mode, one band, frequency allocation, or low-power or minimum effective antennas. They push for maximum legal and allowable resources if they really want to work the DX station for an all-time new one (ATNO).

The solar minimum, which typically lasts for 4 – 6 years, is at the bottom of the sunspot cycle when there are few or no sunspots on the sun. Solar observers have been seeing this occurrence for the past 500 years. During this time, the high bands are very limited at best.

During the last solar minimum, between Solar Cycles 23 and 24 (2006 – 2011), several major DXpeditions took place with extraordinary results, including VP6DX to Ducie Island (2008) making some 183,584 contacts with almost no

A Tribute to Carl Ernest Smith, N4AA

Carl Ernest Smith, N4AA, passed away on October 20, 2017, after suffering from complications from a fall the prior month. Carl was first licensed, like many of us, as a teenager. His first call was WN0YFT from Kansas City in 1954, later becoming W0YFT.

He served in the United States Air Force between 1958 and 1966. After moving to North Carolina, he was issued the call W4NQA. Carl worked at ARRL Headquarters as Assistant Circulation Manager from 1968 to 1970 and was then known as W1ETU. Next, he moved to Richmond, Virginia, and became a member of the Potomac Valley Radio Club and got back his W4NQA call. In the '70s, he moved back to North Carolina, where he picked up his N4AA call in 1976.

Carl purchased *QRZ DX* and *The DX Magazine* in early 1996. I remember meeting Carl for the first time as we sat at the same table at the Dayton DX Dinner a few months later. He told me how excited he was to be the editor.

Carl dabbled in many aspects of our great hobby for some 63 years. He wasn't just a DXer; he also enjoyed contesting and ragchewing. In addition to being the editor of *QRZ DX* and *The DX Magazine*, Carl wrote for *CQ Magazine*, was a founder of the W4DXCC Convention, reestablished Chapter 145 of the Quarter Century Wireless Association (QCWA),

and established the Southern Appalachian Radio Museum.

In 2009, Carl, operating as C6AAA, went on his first DXpedition to the Bahamas, with Joe, W8GEX, and Joe, AA4NN. I remember reading about how excited he was to finally do what he'd been writing about for so many years. He was inducted into the CQ DX Hall of Fame in 2012.

Rest in peace, N4AA.



The late Carl Smith, N4AA, at his station in Asheville, North Carolina. [Lynn Lamb, W4NL, photo]

sunspots, N8S on Swains Island (2007) with 116,872 contacts, 3B7C on St. Brandon (2007) making 137,484 contacts, K5 on Desecheo (2009) with 115,590 in the log, ZL8X in the Kermadec Islands (2010) with 148,570 entries in the log, and VK9DWS on Willis (2008) making 95,169 contacts.¹

Enrico also reminds us that the highest density of DXers and DXpedition funds come from the North American east and west coasts, Europe, and Japan. Each of these areas have their own distinct propagation advantages and disadvantages. Going through the polar paths, especially at the bottom of the sunspot cycle, can be a real problem. Thanks to Enrico for this interesting article. Those who wish to read it can translate it into their native tongue by using Google Translate.

DX News from Around the Globe

3Y — Bouvet Island

Don't forget the 3Y0Z DXpedition is expected to begin in late January. This one ranks number 2 worldwide on the DXCC Most Wanted List. The last time this one was on the air was February 9, 2008. Check <https://www.bouvetdx.org> for more information.

6Y — Jamaica

Japanese operators JA3HJI, JA3UJR, JH3LSS, JI3DNN, and JA3AVO have announced their plans to operate as 6Y6J for their annual DXpedition. They will be operating from St. Elizabeth starting in mid-January. They have a website at <http://javavo.jp/6y6j.htm>.

T5 — Somalia

Ken, LA7GIA, and Adrian, KO8SCA, will activate T5 Somalia for 12 full

days in early January. Expect operations to take place on 160 through 10 meters. Their gear will consist of a two-element beam antenna for the high bands, along with wire and vertical antennas for lower bands. They will also have low-band RX antennas and power amplifiers. Somalia is currently ranked #54 mixed and #48 on CW. All modes will be employed, although this will primarily be a CW operation. Plans are to set up a humanitarian fundraiser for UNICEF Somalia in conjunction with this trip. Please see www.la7gia.com for more details. OQRS and LoTW will be available.

V4 — St. Kitts and Nevis

Your DX editor is making a second attempt at operating from St. Kitts. At the end of January, my wife, Becky, N3OSH, and I will be spending 2 weeks at the home station of John, V47JA/W5JON, and Kathy, V47HAM/W5HAM. More details next month.

VP8/H – South Shetland Islands

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Russian Bellingshausen Base on King George Island in the South Shetland Islands, Alexandr Ushakov, UA1OJL, will be using special call RI50ANO from January 1 to March 31, 2018. This will be his summer time, and he plans to be active in his spare time on all bands on CW, SSB, and digital modes. A special certificate will be available to those working him. QSL via RN1ON either direct, Club Log, via the bureau, or LoTW.

Wrap-Up

A special thanks to JA3AVO and LA7GIA for helping to make this month's column possible. Don't forget to send your DX, IOTA, and contest expedition news to bernie@dailydx.com. Until next month, see you in the pileups!
— Bernie, W3UR

New Products

BridgeCom Systems BCH-270 Dual-Band Handheld

The BCH-270 dual-band FM handheld covers 2 meters and 70 centimeters with extended receive capability (136 – 174 and 400 – 470 MHz). The transmitter supplies up to 5 W RF output, and battery life is said to be up to 12 hours.

The BCH-270 includes a battery, antenna, belt clip, lanyard, charger base, and wall plug. Programming software is available for free download. Price \$95; \$120 with programming cable. For more information, visit www.bridgecomsystems.com.



Begali Sculpture Janus Paddle

The Sculpture Janus is a high-performance dual-lever paddle with narrow paddle spacing, and all the features of the line of Begali Sculpture paddles. With the twist of a screw, you can adjust the mechanism so that squeezing the paddles will no longer produce alternating dits and dahs, in effect making the Sculpture Janus a single-lever paddle. Like the other Sculpture keys, the Janus is made from stainless steel, the moving parts are lightweight aircraft aluminum, the racing bearings are instrument grade, and the contacts are solid gold. The base uses a rubber ring to prevent slippage, and four rubber feet are included. Price is about \$600, depending on the current exchange rate. For more information, visit www.i2rtf.com.



¹German DX Foundation Mega DXpeditions Honor Roll (www.gdxf.de/megadxpeditions/honorroll.php).