
THE FEEDLINE

Volume 33, Issue 6 The Voice of the Western Illinois Amateur Radio Club

June 2009

From the Desk of the President

I would like to encourage everyone to come out for our club Field Day on June 27th and 28th. Field Day will be held at the Adams County Regional Training Center which is located at the Quincy University North Campus on North 18th Street in Quincy. There will be some changes in operation this year as we will return to a 24 hour operation. Also this year we plan to have a small beam which should enhance our operating capability during daylight hours. We should have 3 stations up and running. Also planned is, of course, a cook out for everyone and their families but snacks will be available throughout the night. If you want to grill a burger at 1AM, I think that can be arranged. Hardee's starts serving their cinnamon raisin biscuits at 3:15 AM. For those who have never worked an all night field day it can be incredibly fun. The camaraderie and fellowship will be well worth your time. If you don't want to operate, stop by and sit a spell. Taking advantage of the venue entertainment in the form of DVD's from the Northern California DX Foundation have been

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DX & Computer Horizons June 2009

by Cliff Ahrens K0CA

The Dayton Hamvention 2009 was another fun running of this annual world-wide gathering of hams. Friday was gorgeous, with cool and sunny weather. Saturday had intermittent rain showers, but of course it wouldn't be Dayton if it didn't rain sometime during the weekend. If there was ever a question whether DX is alive and well, it was answered by the huge volume of business the DXCC card checkers did, particularly on Friday. I don't know how many thousands of cards were checked, but interest in DXCC is still very high. Just imagine what it will be like in a few years when more sunspots show up! As regular readers of this article know, I've been talking for several years about putting up a receive antenna for the low bands. But every year the snow starts flying before I've done anything. Well, this year at Dayton, I ordered a K9AY multi-directional receive loop antenna kit. If I start on this project early, maybe it will be ready for next winter!

This month I'm going to try a change in the format of my DX Horizons article. In the past, I've included information about some of the upcoming DX planned for the next month. But a monthly snapshot is not as current or complete as the several good, free DX bulletins that update this information weekly. These include the ARRL DX Bulletin, the Ohio/Penn DX Bulletin, and the 425 DX News. If you're not already subscribed to these, just do a Google or other search and get on their email lists. Instead, I'll comment on DX and operating tips, computer software, hardware, and other topics of interest to DXers. Another great source of DX information is Bernie W3UR's The Daily DX

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requested and should contribute to an enjoyable weekend. I hope to see everyone there at some point during the weekend. If you wish to operate please contact me at WM4D@arrl.net or 217-242-7559 and leave me a voice mail.

73

Ken, WM4D

May Meeting Minutes

The May 2009 meeting of the Western Illinois ARC was called to order by president Ken, WM4D, at 7:39 PM. Introductions were made, the minutes from the April meeting were approved as published in the newsletter (N9TMM/NA9Q) and the Treasurer's report was read and approved (W9WW/K2PEY).

Mike, NA9Q, reported the repeater board had met and there might be an intermittent sensitivity or outside interference issue with the 147.030 repeater.

Joe, K2PEY, reported he had picked up the equipment donated to the club by the family of Maury Butts. It consisted of a TS-520S, MC-50 microphone, VFO-520, TR-7400, a Vibroplex bug and an SWR meter. The equipment was tested and both radios were in operating condition although the TR7400 did not come with a power cord and the VFO-520 could not be tested due to a missing interconnect cable. Motion was made by WM9DX/KB9ZFG to keep all equipment except the TR7400. The equipment will be made available to loan to club members that do not have their own equipment, with an emphasis on new hams. The TR7400 will be sold to the highest bidder. It was also discussed that we should repair the club's original TS-520S and make it available to members as well.

Old business: Todd AB9QW will see that the books the club had voted to give to the Quincy Public Library would be delivered. The club had approved donating an ARRL Amateur Radio Handbook, an ARRL Antenna Book, and Technician, General and Extra class study guides last year. (continued on page 3)

and The Weekly DX, which are available for an annual fee.

Are you interested in CW, but having trouble copying callsigns? If so, check out a free program called RufzXP. It's an excellent training software for improving code speed and CW practice by copying call signs. The program will send callsigns at 8 words per minute and faster. The program sends random selected true amateur radio calls to be typed into the keyboard. If the call has been copied correctly, the transmitting speed increases: if not, it decreases. It's a lot of fun, and a great CW practice tool. And it runs fine under Vista too. For more information, or to download RufzXP, go to: <http://www.rufzxp.net/>.

Some time ago, I mentioned a free Windows Vista gadget that will allow you to watch DX spots in the sidebar or desktop. The author, Alex, KR1ST, has just updated the gadget, to make it work with the new DX Summit. Get it at: <http://www.kr1st.com/spotter.htm>. You can select from different bands and modes. You can even have Spotter search for a DX call sign so that whenever someone spots that station, it will show it in the spotting window. It's very convenient to quickly check the DX Summit from your computer's desktop without having to run Internet Explorer. It's a great tool for the DX'er.

That's it for this month. Don't forget to check the latest DX news in the weekly DX bulletins.

73 and good DX, Cliff K0CA

County Hunting

If you wonder why I keep coming back to this topic, it might be because this is about the only operating I have done for a loooooong time! "Putting out" (operating from) or working an occasional county is something I can do without a lot of prior planning while I drive. If I'm putting out a county and my phone rings (not unusual), I just tell the masses "fone fone qrx" and take care of the call, then come back. (continued page 3)

I *have * been known to finish a “run” on CW while also talking on the phone, but don’t tell anyone....

Net Control stations: Net Control stations for June are:

June 3 WM9DX
June 10 NG9R
June 17 WM4D
June 24 NG9R
July 1 WM9DX

Field Day discussion was lead by WM4D. We will again be at the Quincy Regional Training Facility at the QU North Campus at 18th and Seminary Road. Set up will begin about 9:30 on Saturday June 27 and operation will start at 1:00 PM local time and run through 1:00 PM local time on Sunday June 28. There will be a carry in supper at 6:00 PM and the club will supply hot dogs, hamburgers, condiments and drinks. Please bring a covered dish or two to share, your own table service and the grills will be available if you prefer to bring your own meat to grill. The plan is to operate all 24 hours this year, so we are in need of operators for all hours. More details will be discussed at the June meeting.

Swapfest: Mike, NA9Q, indicated there is a need for volunteers for the VE test session to be given in conjunction with the Swapfest on August 8. Danny, NG9R, will be the contact person and Darell, N9DT, will lead the session. Ken, WM4D, is going to take care of getting publicity sent to magazines. The Swapfest is registered and sanctioned by the ARLL, so notices need to be sent to other Ham Radio magazines other than QST World Radio News, CQ, etc.).

Motion to adjourn by N9TMM, seconded by NA9Q, motion passed. A program on Amateur Radio and the Adams County Emergency Operations Center was given by Nicole, KB7IDE.

Respectfully submitted,
Danny NG9R

Don't forget !!!

For the latest club news, check out the WIARC Home Page on the Internet:

<http://www.w9awe.org/>

Information on county hunting is widely available. I'll quote from the “County Hunter News”, compiled by N4CD:

County Hunter Nets run on 14.0565, 10.122.5, and 7056.5, with activity nights on 3556.5 on Tuesday evenings around 8-9pm Eastern Time. Also, with low sunspot activity, most of the SSB activity now is on ‘friendly net’ 7188/7185 KHz. The cw folks are now pioneering 17M operation on 18.0915. (21.0565, 24.915.5, and 28.0565 when sunspots better). Look around 18135 or 18.132.5 for occasional 17M SSB runs.

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

De N4CD (email: telegraphy@verizon.net)

Also from the County Hunter News:

Solar Cycle 24

May 8, 2009: A new active period of Earth-threatening solar storms will be the weakest since 1928 and its peak is still four years away, after a slow start

Not to be an alarmist, but....

From NAS:

"If a solar flare on the scale of the September 1, 1859 Carrington Event (named after solar astronomer Richard Carrington who observed it from England) (see opposite column) were to happen today we would very quickly revert to a much more primitive level of living that would last for months or years. No electricity means no water. No water means death.

According to the NAS report, a severe space weather event in the US could induce ground currents that would knock out 300 key transformers within about 90 seconds, cutting off the power for more than 130 million people. First to go - immediately for some people - is drinkable water. Anyone living in a high-rise apartment, where water has to be pumped to reach them, would be cut off straight away. For the rest, drinking water will still come through the taps for maybe half a day. With no electricity to pump water from reservoirs, there is no more after that.

There is simply no electrically powered transport: no trains, underground or overground. Our just-in-time culture for delivery networks may represent the pinnacle of efficiency, but it means that supermarket shelves would empty very quickly - delivery trucks could only keep running until their tanks ran out of fuel, and there is no electricity to pump any more from the underground tanks at filling stations.

These transformers normally take a year to build each. More than just these key transformers would be damaged. "The truly shocking finding is that this whole situation would not improve for months, maybe years: melted transformer hubs cannot be repaired, only replaced." "From the surveys I've done, you might have a few spare transformers around, but installing a new one takes a well-trained crew a week or more," says Kappenman. "A major electrical utility might have one suitably trained crew, maybe two." Within a month, then, the handful of spare transformers would be used up. The rest will have to be built to order, (cont page 5)

last December, predicts an international panel of experts led by NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Center. Even so, Earth could get hit by a devastating solar storm at any time, with potential damages from the most severe level of storm exceeding \$1 trillion. NASA funds the prediction panel.

Solar storms are eruptions of energy and matter that escape from the sun and may head toward Earth, where even a weak storm can damage satellites and power grids, disrupting communications, the electric power supply and GPS.

A single strong blast of solar wind can threaten national security, transportation, financial services and other essential functions.

The panel predicts the upcoming Solar Cycle 24 will peak in May 2013 with a daily sunspot number of 90. If the prediction proves true, Solar Cycle 24 will be the weakest cycle since number 16, which peaked at 78 daily sunspots in 1928, and ninth weakest since the 1750s, when numbered cycles began.

The most common measure of a solar cycle's intensity is the number of sunspots—Earth-sized blotches on the sun marking areas of heightened magnetic activity. The more sunspots there are, the more likely it is that solar storms will occur, but a major storm can occur at any time.

"As with hurricanes, whether a cycle is active or weak refers to the number of storms, but everyone needs to remember it only takes one powerful storm to cause expensive problems," said NOAA scientist Doug Biesecker, who chairs the panel. "The strongest solar storm on record occurred in 1859 during another below-average cycle similar to the one we are predicting."

The 1859 storm shorted out telegraph wires, causing fires in North America and Europe, sent readings of Earth's magnetic field soaring, and produced

something that can take up to 12 months. Even when some systems are capable of receiving power again, there is no guarantee there will be any to deliver. Almost all natural gas and fuel pipelines require electricity to operate. Coal-fired power stations usually keep reserves to last 30 days, but with no transport systems running to bring more fuel, there will be no electricity in the second month." With no power for heating, cooling or refrigeration systems, people could begin to die within days. There is immediate danger for those who rely on medication. Lose power to New Jersey, for instance, and you have lost a major centre of production of pharmaceuticals for the entire US. Perishable medications such as insulin will soon be in short supply. "In the US alone there are a million people with diabetes," Kappenman says. "Shut down production, distribution and storage and you put all those lives at risk in very short order." Help is not coming any time soon, either. If it is dark from the eastern seaboard to Chicago, some affected areas are hundreds, maybe thousands of miles away from anyone who might help. And those willing to help are likely to be ill-equipped to deal with the sheer scale of the disaster. "If a Carrington event happened now, it would be like a hurricane Katrina, but 10 times worse," says Paul Kintner, a plasma physicist at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. In reality, it would be much worse than that. Hurricane Katrina's societal and economic impact has been measured at \$81 billion to \$125 billion. According to the NAS report, the impact of what it terms a "severe geomagnetic storm scenario" could be as high as \$2 trillion. And that's just the first year after the storm. The NAS puts the recovery time at four to 10 years. It is questionable whether the US would ever bounce back."

Source:

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20127001.300-space-stormalert-90-seconds-from-catastrophe.html?page=1>

northern lights so bright that people read newspapers by their light. *A recent report by the National Academy of Sciences found that if a storm that severe occurred today, it could cause \$1-2 trillion in damages the first year and require four to ten years for recovery, compared to \$80-125 billion that resulted from Hurricane Katrina. (italics mine...ed.)*

The panel also predicted that the lowest sunspot number between cycles—or solar minimum—occurred in December 2008, marking the end of Cycle 23 and the start of Cycle 24. If the December prediction holds up, at 12 years and seven months Solar Cycle 23 will be the longest since 1823 and the third longest since 1755. Solar cycles span 11 years on average, from minimum to minimum. An unusually long, deep lull in sunspots led the panel to revise its 2007 prediction that the next cycle of solar storms would start in March 2008 and peak in late 2011 or mid-2012. The persistence of a quiet sun since the last prediction has led the panel to a consensus that the next cycle will be "moderately weak."

NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Center (SWPC) is the nation's first alert of solar activity and its effects on Earth. The Center's space weather experts issue outlooks for the next 11-year solar cycle and warn of storms occurring on the Sun that could impact Earth. SWPC is also the world warning agency for the International Space Environment Service, a consortium of 12 member nations.

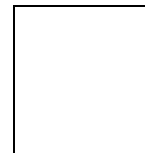
W9AWE – W90AB
The Western Illinois Amateur Radio Club, Inc.
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WIARC email reflector: wiarc@mailman.qth.net

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ILLINOIS QSO PARTY

Newsletter input due by the 20th of the preceding month
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Next meeting Wednesday June 3, 7:30 PM
Blessing at 14th, 7:30 PM, conference room G in the
basement adjoining the cafeteria
Program about the Huber Underground Warehouse