

SUNSPOTS



REDWOOD EMPIRE DX ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 750834, Petaluma, CA 94975

A DX and Contest-minded Amateur Radio Club serving the California coast north of the Golden Gate Bridge

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Visit our Web Site at <http://www.redxa.com/>

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Wednesday, April 13, 2011 at Gourmet Garden Restaurant, Petaluma. If you need directions, please call one of the club officers.

6 pm — Social Hour in the Lounge
7 pm — Dinner and Meeting
8 pm — Program

PROGRAM: Our Program for the evening will be by Alan, K6SRZ who will show us video of the ZK2A DXpedition to Niue Island. Also, we will have a brief talk from Jim, T6AF who has been operating in Afghanistan.

REDXA President's Report

Hams Helping in Japan

Two days after our last meeting, Japan was hit with a terrible earthquake followed by an even more devastating tsunami, marking the worst natural disaster to hit the island nation in 140 years. As has been the case in virtually every disaster anywhere in the world in the past few decades, ham radio operators were there to help and they continue to work as folks in the most effected areas continue to dig out. Stations are set up at shelters and repeaters are in use as the search for the missing goes on.

Unlike Haiti that suffered a severe earthquake in January of last year, Japan is a very wealthy country with a communications infrastructure more advanced than most nations and light years ahead of Haiti, yet despite that, phone and data network systems were destroyed or overloaded from the outset, making ham radio an important and life-saving asset. Should a disaster of that magnitude hit us in our communities, we would most likely see a serious communications deficit that we would be able to help overcome. I daily think of the fact that we live right in the middle of two major fault lines, the San Andreas and the Rodgers Creek-Healdsburg faults, either of which could cause major devastation in our area.



The 'infrastructure independent' nature of ham radio allows for very quick deployment when an emergency strikes, but it only works if we are ready. I hope you will join me in taking a few moments to look around our stations and think about how we would set up operations from our own neighborhoods if all utilities were shut down for several days. Do you have a hand-held with charged batteries ready for use? Could you connect your HF rig to 12 Volts from a car battery if you had to? Do you know the local frequencies that would be used and where you could call in to request rescue or medical assistance if you needed to? If you have a small generator, do you regularly exercise it to make sure it will start up when needed and do you keep extra fuel on hand? This is a good time check on this and make a list of things you can do to be more prepared 'when the big one comes'!

ARRL Field Day is one of the ways we help keep our operating and equipment setup skills honed for the inevitable emergencies ahead...and have a fun time while we're at it! This year's FD event will be no different, and we are already laying down the groundwork for what we hope will be our greatest effort yet. We'll be operating at our usual venue, the Marin Rod and Gun Club in San Rafael in conjunction with our friends at the Marin Amateur Radio Society.

As we discussed at our last meeting, we'll run 3A again this year. The 'third' station will have several functions. We will plan a few hours of RTTY demonstration so that folks who are unfamiliar with that mode of contesting can try their hands at it. When we are not doing RTTY, the station will serve as a training ground for both Phone and CW operators who are not yet ready to take the helm of either of our two primary 'run' stations, yet are over-qualified to operate the GOTA station. When the CW and Phone stations move off a band, the third station can operate S&P on that band to catch the points that were missed. We will also have a 3-element 10 meter antenna in operation, and since 10 has been open almost every day recently, the third station should be able to make quite a few QSO's while CW and Phone are running on the lucrative 20 and 15 meter bands.

Since REDXA is primarily a DX club, we're happy to note that the annual International DX Convention is next week in Visalia. I know, based on requests for banquet table assignments, at least 20 REDXA members will be there, maybe more. We will get a special preview of one of the Visalia presentations at this month's meeting: Alan, K6SRZ will show us video of the ZK2A DXpedition to Niue Island. Also, we will have a brief talk from Jim, T6AF who has been operating in Afghanistan. In May, we will have Bill Ruck, W6VSY, the Chief Transmitter Engineer at KPH give us a slide show on some of the interesting equipment at the historic HF communications station along the coast. I hope to see you all at the April

meeting at the Gourmet Garden and at Visalia!

Treasurer Report

by Jim, K6JS

REDXA TREASURER'S REPORT

2/28/11 Balance Forward		\$2,746.13
INCOME		
Commcats	80.00	
Raffle	35.00	
TOTAL INCOME		115.00
EXPENSES		
TOTAL EXPENSES		(0.00)
3/31/11 Ending Balance		<u>\$2,861.13</u>

REDXA membership renewal is due. Please submit your dues ASAP. Dues can be mailed to me via my home address, which is current on or QRZ.com mailed to the REDXA P.O. Box or given to me personally at our regularly scheduled meetings.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MARCH 2011

by Wally, N6AD

NO MEETING WAS SCHEDULED

MARCH MEETING MINUTES

by Wally, N6AD

President Ron N6IE called the meeting to order at 7:39 pm, March 9, 2011 at the Gourmet Garden in Petaluma. In attendance were 20 members including founding REDXA member Paul W6XA, plus Devon, daughter of Jim K6JS. Ron N6IE requested a motion to accept the minutes of the last meeting and the Treasurer's Report as published in Sunspots. Both were moved for approval, seconded and adopted.

Old Business: Jim K6JS reminded that production of new club badges is stalled for now and asked for a volunteer to find a new vendor, establish design requirements, and place our order. Donna AG6V stepped up. Thanks to Donna.

New Business: REDXA reserved table at Visalia -- places at our table have been filled and a second one is needed. Doug WW6D will organize this effort. VOMARC President Jim K6UUW announced that the Valley of the Moon Hamfest this year will be on April 30 at the Sonoma Veterans Memorial Building. See <http://vomarc.org/> for details. Jim KE6UAR provided a status report on Field Day to be held June

25 – 26:

- 1) we have enlisted CW and SSB captains and are in need of a captain for the planned RTTY effort and also a volunteer for the ARES station
- 2) We need GOTA operators so if you know of any new ops or inactive existing ops, grab them
- 3) The antenna plans at this point include 3 military towers and 2 SteppIR antennas

Upcoming Meetings – April will see a presentation on the ZK2A DXpedition by Alan K6SRZ. In May we will have a presentation on the KPH Project of the Maritime Radio Historical Society by Bill Ruck W6VSY, chief transmit engineer. The June meeting will be devoted to Field Day preparation, with the Field Day wrap up in July.

Preceding the main feature of the evening, Len K6ANP demonstrated a new feature of CommCat which allows remote control of your home station using the iPhone. With this setup you can tune your home transceiver, change modes, send CW using macros, adjust split frequency and more. A station can be selected from the spotter, worked, and logged all from your iPhone. Contact Len for more information. Chuck N6OJ made it known that a \$20 donation to REDXA will get you a free copy of CommCat.

The raffle was won by Doug WW6D who took home half of \$70.

Our program consisted of a presentation by Bill KH6GJV on the ARRL: what it does for us and what's going on currently.
Highlights:

BPL has almost cratered due to cost overruns. It is not dead yet, but thanks largely to the ARRL we are safe for now.

Participation in emergency activities now requires formal ARES training and a membership ID.

The new ARRL website has been live for about a year now. Problems with the site are being addressed and corrected as time goes on.

Logbook of the World currently has 330 DXCC entities using it. For more information see <http://www.arrl.org/logbook-of-the-world>

ARRL Teacher's Institute sessions are offered each summer to teachers wishing to integrate wireless technology and particularly Amateur Radio into their curriculum. See <http://www.arrl.org/teachers-institute-on-wireless-technology>

EMCOMM, the Emergency Communications Enhancement Act, has been reintroduced by Congress as HR 81. See <http://www.arrl.org/hr-81>

Amateur use in the 420 – 450 MHz band is threatened by the US Air Force's UEW, or Upgraded Early Warning Radar, at Beale Air Force Base. This complex defense monitoring system is sensitive to interference from UHF repeaters, some of which have received db reduction letters. See Bill's article on the ARRL website for more information on this and other SF section news: <http://www.arrl.org/Groups/view/san-francisco>

Bill recounted his real life transmitter hunting adventures cruising around with some government types in a \$300K stealth SUV equipped with all manner of monitoring devices spanning 'DC to daylight'. The source of the offending QRM was ultimately found to be a mostly abandoned commercial site housing a transmitter which had become keyed due to a weather related condition.

Support your ARRL!

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 pm.

Monthly San Francisco Section News Summary

Here is the link for the News Summary:
<http://www.arrl.org/sections/?sect=SF>

Contesting and DX News by Jim, K6JS

Contest Roundup

The storm of Saturday night March 19th produced some strong gale force winds, damaging numerous antenna systems throughout the bay area, including a few REDXA members. The deep low pressure system quickly developed off Pt. Arena and pushed strong winds ashore the likes of which we haven't seen in a long time. Reach out to club members if you suffered damage and need assistance rebuilding.

Wrapping up another exciting contest season with two major contests this month: the ARRL DX SSB and the CQ WW WPX SSB. Let's hope your ears have recovered from these two, long, SSB endurance events leaving many with the cacophony of tinnitus ringing the ears.

The first weekend in March brought us the ARRL DX SSB contest along with a rise in solar activity, SFI numbers topped one hundred and fifty for the first time in many years, which has 10 meters playing very well and producing openings into Europe and Africa. 15 meters was in great shape and became the workhorse band, producing the majority of the Q's. It was tough

to miss 9K2K in Kuwait on 20 meters. You could have worked him loading up a wet pasta noodle.

Al, K6RIM beat out K6SRZ for the club competition, both guys putting in a casual effort with less than 9 hours of operating time, while Ex pat Javier, NM6E came in third from the big state of Texas. Javier and Alan worked just shy of DXCC. I played in this contest mobile while running errands around town. I worked twenty countries in an hour's time, including a couple of the big guns from Europe and Africa.

The last weekend of the month gave us the CQ WW WPX SSB contest. More than a handful of REDX'ers came out to play for this one. 15 Meters again was in great shape with 1900Z on both days producing wide open activity from all continents. 20 was hot with Europeans and Africans through 2200Z and 40 was booming with EU through the night.

K6SRZ topped the club competition using the call WF6C and breaking the million point mark. He worked 525 prefixes in eleven and half hours. K6RIM came in 2nd and K6LRN from Somerset in the foothills rounded out the top 3. K6CTA, NM6E and N6ZFO also were active with casual efforts over the weekend. After N6ZFO's 4.2 hours of operating Bill quipped he took several hour breaks during the contest for tax preparation activities, thus fulfilling part of that old ham saying: "you can't avoid death, taxes and the WPX SSB."

A tip of the hat goes to all the members that participated in CQP back in October of 2010. I believe this is our best effort to date with 24 logs and 2,247,496 points. The MOTHER LODE DX/CONTEST CLUB had 27 logs and 3,133,268. The CQP top club in California award, a plaque REDXA has sponsored for many years is within reach for REDXA and with the addition of a quite few new members I feel the top spot is in our sights!

REDXA had four wine winners in the top twenty, K6SRZ(6th), AA6YX(@W6XU)(11th), K6RIM(15th) and N6IE(19th). N6YEU grabbed the number two expedition spot while setting a new County record (162,022) from Del Norte. K6LRN and K6JS also broke into the top ten of the MS expedition class. Alan, K6SRZ and his expedition team of NI6T and AD6E planned for months to activate San Francisco county operating from City property on Treasure Island in the center of SF bay. When they arrived to setup, they were told they could not operate despite advance reservations and advance fee payment. NI6T left the island and joined the Tehema M/M team while K6SRZ(W6PZ) went home and focused his anger to set a new S/O record for Sonoma county. K6SRZ also volunteered to be log checker for this contest. Great job folks!!!

Earlier in the year, KY0W (K6SRZ op) was awarded first place 6th Call Area TB-wires HP CW and #6 USA and #9 N.A. for the 2010 CW WPX.

The last major contests of the season to look forward to are: CQ WW WPX CW at the end of May and Field Day in June. Don't forget to send in your logs for ARRL DX SSB and CQ WW WPX SSB in April. Don't forget to CC me with your contest scores and awards.

Check out the online contest calendar at:
<http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/>

73, Jim K6JS

The DX Front

As technology seems to make the world a smaller place, it's still hard to fathom the magnitude of a disaster half a world away. We regularly talk around the world with our radios. After the great JA quake I began to think of my JA friends and the familiar contest calls wondering how they fared. The island nation of Japan hosts 1.3 million licensed hams. Most of the tsunami devastation was concentrated in the JA7 region. If you are interested, Google has posted a crisis response page if you want to get involved.

<http://www.google.com/crisisresponse/japanquake2011.html>

Social networking is working its way into the realm of ham radio. We are starting to see Facebook and Twitter posts in real time on Dxpeditions. The S21YZ-Bangladesh group were posting their band changes and interacting with posts from hams around the world. We see reverse beacon networks that can have a big impact on how you operate a CW contest, skimmers and remote contest stations. Javier made a handful of QSO's on his Ipad and I made a QSO using the Comcat logging program Iphone app. It will be interesting to see what new technologies will integrate with ham radio in the future.

The ionosphere is finally cooperating and producing some great conditions with this past month being one of the best in many years. The monthly average for sunspot numbers from 12/2010 to 3/2011, were 22, 32.2, 53.5 and 81.1. This is a dramatic increase in solar activity since the new year. This will make a big difference on ten meters and twelve meters, which has been extremely productive in the past few days, with European DX from 1500-2200Z! I hear this every day during my morning and evening commutes on the 101 corridor. The once dead band is now full of signals. Seventeen meters and fifteen meters are loaded with DX stations from sunrise to well after sunset.

I called VU4PB and the S21YZ stations in vain, spending many hours trying to bust through the pileups to no avail. It's a very difficult path for us on the West coast. My little pistol station will be off the air for awhile as the storm brought down the multi band dipole I use for the low bands. The tower/beam was lowered and dismantled in anticipation of a new tower project this summer.

In contrast to VU4 and S21, the 4A4A expedition to Revilla Gigedo was like shooting fish in a barrel. REDXA guys were stringing up antennas for the Top band just to get them in the log. I managed sixteen band/mode slots while N6OJ swept the chart first with twenty six band/mode QSO's. Chuck is ranked 21st in the nation, while K6RIM 36th and K6ANP 38th also with twenty six QSO sweeps. Other REDXA members making it into the top one hundred are: K6MM 73rd, W6WR 93rd. W6GMP managed twenty five slots, missing only 160 RTTY. This friendly competition to work 4A4A is what prompted the idea to initiate the REDXA Honor roll list mentioned below.

Honor roll page:

I'd like to start a REDXA Honor roll page to be published in Sunspots. I envision this as a friendly, fun page to track club members DX accomplishments and to foster activity within the club. This would be modeled after N2SS's page from the FRC. I contacted Tony and he said the honor roll has increased activity within the club and inspired folks that have worked them all to become more active. It is self sustaining, meaning members send in their accomplishments to me, I will not solicit them. Please contact me if you want to track other categories (grid squares, counties, etc). I'm interested to see what kind of participation we'll get from our small, but active club.

Rules for the REDXA Honor Roll Listings.

Provide me with your total IOTAs worked, or countries (including deleted) worked for: WARC Bands, 160 Meters, Digital modes, Mobile, 6 Meters or your total for 80,40,20, 15 and 10 for 1.5K Club. Countries do not count until HQ Awards Committee takes action and announces a start date for a new country. I will manage the rest.

Fred, N6YEU is enjoying his recent retirement and reports working A71MA, 4Z4DX, ZB2FK, EL2GB, A92GR an all time new one, 3B8MM (2 bands) and 4 JA's on 12 mtrs CW, all low power. Good job Fred.

Fred's A92, Bahrain QSO was accomplished in the midst of a country declaring martial law as it struggles to quell uprisings across the small island nation.

Announced DXpeditions are too numerous to print and can be found at:
<http://www.ng3k.com/Misc/adxo.html>

REDXA will be well represented at Visalia with close to 20 members making the trek South. In closing I'd like to recognize Donna, AG6V for her work in securing another vendor for our REDXA badges. A big thank you from all of us!

Turn on the rigs and enjoy some of the best conditions we've seen in years.

73, Jim K6JS

CONTEST SCORES

ARRL DX Contest, SSB

Call	Class	Hrs	QSOs	Mults	Score
K6RIM	SOAB(A) HP	8.8	406	205	247,845
K6SRZ	SOHP(A)	7.5			186,186
NM6E	SOAB(A) HP	8	218	141	91,791

WPX SSB 2010

Call	Class	Hrs	QSOs	Prfx	Score
WF6C	SO(A)AB HP (Op-K6SRZ)	11.5	792	525	1,030,575
K6RIM	SO(A)AB HP	10.5	536	384	571,008
K6LRN	SOAB HP	14.5	471	356	430,048
K6CTA	SO(A)SB15 HP	7	208	187	105,281
NM6E	SO(A)AB HP (TEXAS)	12	243	182	92,638
N6ZFO		4.2	62	177	10,797

Calendar of Upcoming Events:

- Apr 13 * REDXA Monthly Meeting
- Apr 15-17 Int'l DX Convention Visalia
- May 6-8 EMCOMMWEST 2011, Reno NV
- May 7-8 7th Call Area QSO Party
- May 11 * REDXA Monthly Meeting
- May 28-29 CQ WPX CW
- Jun 8 * REDXA Monthly Meeting
- Jun 11-13 ARRL June VHF QSO Party
- Jun 18-19 All Asian DX Contest
- Jun 25-26 ARRL Field Day
- Jul 1 RAC Canada Day Contest
- Jul 9-10 IARU HF World Championship
- Jul 13 * REDXA Monthly Meeting
- Jul 16-17 North American QSO Party RTTY
- Jul 16-17 CQ WW VHF Contest

See <http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/> for more Contest Schedules.

VOMARC HAMFEST

The Valley of the Moon Amateur Radio Club (VOMARC) will be hosting its annual hamfest on April 30th.

The day will feature a pancake and egg breakfast, VE session, station demonstrations, fox hunt, and swap meet.

Please join us in this rare opportunity to visit with other north coast hams.

For more information and directions, see <http://vomarc.org/events.html> and go to the the Hamfest flyer and map area.

Jim Hill, K6UUW
President VOMARC

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MEETING: APRIL 13, 2011

