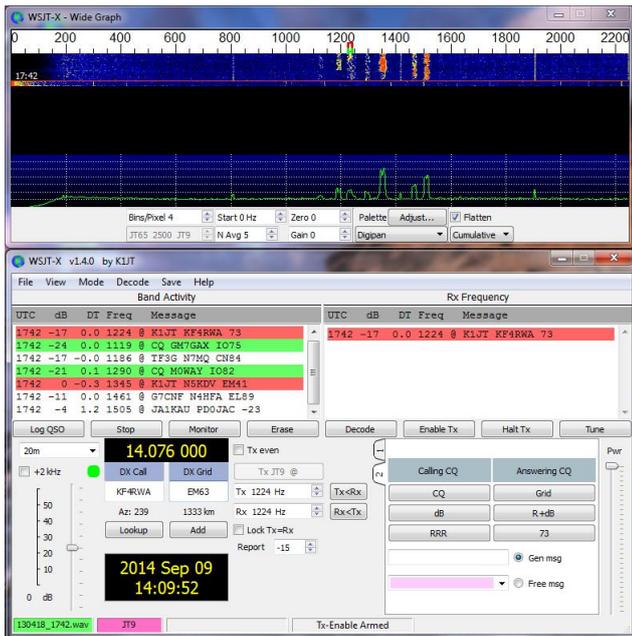




SQUELCH TALES



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for November 2017



FT8 mode is frequency shift keyed (FSK) with 8 tones spaced at 6.25Hz for an overall bandwidth of 50Hz. According to the developers, Joe Taylor, K1JT and Steven Franke, K9AN FT8 can receive signal levels down to a -20dB.

Although FT8 is still in development stage (beta) it was released to the ham radio community with WSJT-X v1.8.0 free program available at:

<https://sourceforge.net/projects/wsjt/files/wsjtx-1.8.0-rc1/>

or

<http://physics.princeton.edu/pulsar/k1jt/wsjtx.html>

Versions for Windows, Linux and Mac OS are available.

FT8 activity can be found on the following frequencies:

1.84 MHz, 3.573 MHz, 7.074 MHz, 10.136 MHz, 14.074 MHz, 18.1 MHz, 21.074 MHz, 24.915 MHz, 28.074 MHz, 50.313 MHz.

JT8 like JT65 and other 'JT' modes employ precise computer clock synchronization via the internet. Another time keeping method is via the NetTime program, available from:

<http://timesynctool.com>.

One thing you will notice about FT8 is that it is fast. There's almost no time to click the program QSO buttons to send a reply in time to sync up. Fortunately, the JT8 program has an auto-sequence feature which the operator can be

FT8 is fast becoming the primary weak signal digital mode

A report by Bruce Randall, W1ZE

In the September issue of this newsletter there was a short column titled "A Quick move to FT8 by Six Meter DXers" that noted the increasing popularity of this new digital mode on the six meter band. Since then the FT8 has spread to the HF bands in a big way. So I thought I would discuss it further.

used to complete a standard QSO without having to manually select each message. Like JT65 the QSO is a rubber stamp contact that exchanges call signs, QTH and signal reports. Like JT65 It's not for rag-chew QSOs. However you can send a custom short message you can stick to the QSO format.

Already it seems that digital mode Op's have switched from JT65 to FT8, especially DXers, DX-peditions, VHF grid square hunters and contesters. No, it is not as fast as RTTY or CW but stations asking for repeat exchanges is greatly reduced due to the modes weak signal accuracy.

If you haven't already downloaded WSJT-X v1.8 I suggest you do so and check out JT65 and it's offspring FT8.



W1ZE & XYL heading back to W6-land, again.

Editors note

November is when XYL Donna and yours truly make our cross country commute in the direction of our second QTH in San Diego (Poway) California. We were going to do the Holiday Season here in Maine then fly to southern California on January third, but our plans have changed.

Donna has decided to sell her home in Poway and become a full time Maine resident for several reasons. Her Granddaughters will graduate High School this coming June then they are off to college, so she will not see much of them. Second reason is that maintaining two homes was putting a cramp on our retirement budget and we both want to do a little more traveling throughout the year.

In mid winter here in Maine and cabin fever sets in we can head south or southwest for a month or so and warm up a bit.

Affordable homes in the San Diego area is much in demand so she anticipates a moderately quick sale. For that reason we decided to gas up the old buggy and head west on November first. Our planned route, weather permitting is through Montreal and Ottawa then cross back into the States at Sault Ste. Marie, ON/MI. From there then head west on I-90 to Tacoma, WA so Donna can visit her older sister who is in poor health. Then head south on I-5 to San Diego and do the Holidays with Donna's family, then start preparing the house for sale.

I will do my best to get a monthly newsletter out to you all. As usual, newsletter content is most appreciated so if you have something you would like to contribute, email it to me at W1ZE@arrl.net.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving, *73, Bruce, W1ZE*



Hams help out in Puerto Rico

Contributed by Larry banks, W1DYJ

When things went dark and quiet in Puerto Rico, a cadre of amateur radio operators became a lifeline on the island.

About two dozen amateur radio operators on the island helped police and first responders communicate when their radio networks failed completely. Some of the radio operators, or hams traveled on trucks to provide communications to the power company, PREPA.

Worth reading:

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/puerto-rico-amateur-radio-operators-are-playin-g-key-role-puerto-n805426>



Midcoast ARES-CERT assist fire departments for Fire Safety Day



On Wednesday October 11th two teams of Midcoast ARES/CERT and MARA members set up show-n-tell tables at the Brunswick, Cooks Corner and the Freeport fire stations. Both Fire departments requested participation from the local Ham Radio group since ARES/CERT supports and assists their departments.



John Goran, K1JJS and Harry McNelley volunteered to support the Freeport effort while Marjorie Turner, KX1I, Bruce Randall, W1ZE and Richard Michael, AB1YX manned the Brunswick event.



Turnout at Brunswick as in previous years was large with lots of very young folks looking to check everything out.

Marjorie set up her light & sound CW-Morse Code demo that was a lot of fun for the young folks attempting to tap out their first “S O S ” on the telegraph keys.



W1ZE set up his IC-706 along with his portable Magnetic Loop antenna and tuned it to SSB and CW QSOs on the 20 and 17 meter bands.



Both department Fire Chefs thanked the two ARES/CERT teams for their support and said their participation was greatly appreciated.

Photos provided by KX1I, N1TTT & K1JJS



Propagation, Handy Hints for DXers

By Pete Chamalian, W1RM

Forward FYI from Larry Banks, W1DYJ

There's always a great deal of interest in propagation for the upcoming contest season. A great presentation by K9LA and W3LPL is here and very much worth looking at:

<http://wwrof.org/webinar-archive/a-look-at-propagation-for-the-2017-2018-contest-season/>

Basically, you can expect the band behavior you expect on any given band when the sunspots are up will move down a band during the sunspot minimum. So 40 will be like 20, 20 will be like 15, etc.

Another great resource is the VOCAP site:

<http://www.voacap.com/p2p/index.html>

Just plug in your location and antennas and take a look at which band will be open when.

Pete, W1RM W1RM@Comcast.net

YCCC Reflector <mailto:yccc@contesting.com>

Yankee Clipper Contest Club

<http://www.yccc.org>

Reflector Info:

<http://lists.contesting.com/mailman/listinfo/yccc>



Anderson Power Pole connectors. How To



The Anderson Power Pole has become one of the most popular low voltage DC power connecting receptacles in use by Hams. The connection device has become a standard and recommended by ARES groups and portable operators to simplify connection compatibility.

The connectors are well engineered and provide a reliable power fastener device and moderately easy to assemble.

The following websites provide a good DIY tutorial on how to assemble them:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzLvdR6X81k>

<http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Public%20Service/TrainingModules/Technical/Anderson%20powerpole.pdf>

