NCDXF/IARU Beacon Project

The Northern California DX Foundation (NCDXF), in cooperation with the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU), constructed and operates a worldwide network of high-frequency radio beacons on 14.100, 18.110, 21.150, 24.930, and 28.200 MHz. These beacons help amateur and commercial high-frequency radio users assess the current condition of the ionosphere. The entire system is designed, built and operated by volunteers at no cost except for the actual price of hardware components, shipping costs, and so on.

The network of 18 beacons operate on a schedule as not to interfere with other beacons on the network. Each beacon transmits every three minutes, day and night. This table gives the minute and second of the start of the first transmission within the hour for each beacon on each frequency. A transmission consists of the callsign of the beacon sent at 22 words per minute followed by four one-second dashes. The callsign and the first dash are sent at 100 watts. The remaining dashes are sent at 10 watts, 1 watt and 100 milliwatts.

In principle, one can simply listen on the beacon frequencies and copy the CW callsigns of the various beacons to figure out where the band is open, but in practice, not every ham operator can copy calls at twenty-two words per minute and some beacons may be heard at too low a signal strength to catch the call. Because the beacons transmit at known times, it is easy to know which beacon one is hearing without actually copying the CW callsign. Since the beacons are running one hundred watts to a vertical, even a weak beacon signal may indicate a path with excellent propagation for stations using higher power and directive antennas.

In order to know which beacon is transmitting at any particular time, one can either refer to the Beacon Transmission Schedule or use your computer and one of the Programs to Help Beacon Listeners. If you want to know where to point your antenna or decide which beacons are the most interesting to you, you can refer to the Beacon Locations. If you have a computer and a computer-compatible radio and would like a record of when various beacons can be heard at your QTH, you will want to learn about Automated Beacon Monitoring.

The IARU HF Band Plan reserves the beacon frequencies for the International Beacon Project. Almost all member societies

of the IARU have incorporated this recommendation in the band plans in their countries. In some countries it is mandatory by law, and in other countries it is recommended operating practice. Interference from amateurs should be reported to the appropriate member society of the country where the interference originates.

The IARU maintains monitoring stations in each of the three regions responsible for reporting non-amateur operation in the amateur bands to the appropriate authorities.

Where and when do you listen for these beacons? This table provides the answers. Some stations are temporarily off the air due to equipment issues or operating intermittently due to geographic unrest or unstable power conditions.

Call	Location	14.100	18.110	21.150	24.930	28.200
4U1UN	United Nations	00:00	00:10	00:20	00:30	00:40
VE8AT	Canada	00:10	00:20	00:30	00:40	00:50
W6WX	United States	00:20	00:30	00:40	00:50	01:00
KH6WO	Hawaii	00:30	00:40	00:50	01:00	01:10
ZL6B	New Zealand	00:40	00:50	01:00	01:10	01:20
VK6RBP	Australia	00:50	01:00	01:10	01:20	01:30
JA2IGY	Japan	01:00	01:10	01:20	01:30	01:40
RR9O	Russia	01:10	01:20	01:30	01:40	01:50
VR2B	Hong Kong	01:20	01:30	01:40	01:50	02:00
4S7B	Sri Lanka	01:30	01:40	01:50	02:00	02:10
ZS6DN	South Africa	01:40	01:50	02:00	02:10	02:20
5Z4B	Kenya	01:50	02:00	02:10	02:20	02:30
4X6TU	Israel	02:00	02:10	02:20	02:30	02:40
OH2B	Finland	02:10	02:20	02:30	02:40	02:50
CS3B	Madeira	02:20	02:30	02:40	02:50	00:00
LU4AA	Argentina	02:30	02:40	02:50	00:00	00:10
OA4B	Peru	02:40	02:50	00:00	00:10	00:20
YV5B	Venezuela	02:50	00:00	00:10	00:20	00:30

Be Careful On 10 Meters

With recent band openings beginning on 10 meters, ARRL has received word that a number of amateurs have been heard using SSB below 28.300. "We urge everyone to remember that 28.000 to 28.300 MHz is reserved for RTTY and data, including CW," said ARRL Field and Regulatory Correspondent Chuck Skolaut, K0BOG. "Phone is permitted from 28.300 to 28.500 for Novice and Technician class licensees with a maximum power of 200 W. Phone and image are allowed from 28.300 up to 29.700 for General, Advanced and Extra class license holders." Skolaut, who manages the Official Observer and Intruder Watch programs, said that people have called and e-mailed ARRL HQ inquiring about hearing IDs repeated in code on various 10 meter frequencies. "What they are hearing are beacons," Skolaut said; he suggests checking out some Web sites for more information on beacons you might hear on 10 meters and other bands

Morse Code Returning to MARS

After more than a dozen years, Morse code will soon be returning to Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS) nets. In the mid-1990s, the Department of Defense (DoD) did away with CW operation across the board -- including MARS nets -- as automatic systems such as the Internet, SATCOM, cell phones and e-mail became available and the payroll cost of manual operators escalated.

MARS members who had embraced CW operation knew that Morse code, the most "digital" mode of all, was an important tool for Emergency Communications. After Hurricane Katrina demonstrated the need for more robust -- not to mention quickly deployable EmComm resources -- some MARS members led a campaign to resume CW operations on their nets. This resulted in the Chiefs of Army MARS and Navy-Marine Corps MARS calling for a census of interested MARS members as the first step to reactivating regular training nets.

Army MARS Chief Stu Carter told his members last October, "We are pushing for the Department of Defense to use CW again." He designated CW veteran Grant Hays, WB6OTS -- Operations Chief for Army MARS at its Fort Huachuca, Arizona headquarters -- to coordinate the effort. Like many hams who are skilled at Morse code, Hays, an ARRL Life Member and active ARES/RACES participant in Arizona, has taken a leading role in introducing new technology such as WinLink.

Army MARS launched a limited test of CW nets in four Midwestern states in late 2007. During a DoD interoperability test this past March, a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) station used it to communicate with Ft Huachuca.

In announcing the return of CW to MARS nets, Navy-Marine Corps MARS Chief Bo Lindfors cited an emergency where CW was sorely missed: "I remember the [1998] Northeast Ice Storm shortly after I became [Navy-Marine Corps MARS] Chief and the unnecessarily lengthy effort by all of southern New England to receive one voice EEI [Essential Elements of Information Report] from a northern New England member whose antenna was covered in ice and lying on the ground. It took more than an hour when CW could have handled it in a few minutes. As more and more of our members enter MARS with no Morse code experience, I am afraid that we will soon lose that skill set if we don't do something."

Army MARS Chief Carter said the imminent return of CW will not replace modes such as WinLink, Pactor 3 and MT63. "Our

CW nets will focus on maintenance of skills and will necessarily be limited by the shortage of available frequencies and trained members," he said. "But if members want to add CW to their skills, the nets will be available for training."

MARS's primary mission is providing auxiliary communications to the US Military and emergency communications to such national agencies as FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security. MARS is also available to assist state and local emergency response agencies, and public and select private agencies such as the Red Cross. On a day-to-day basis, MARS members are available to handle messages to and from servicemen and women on active duty, in the reserve or guard, or retired, as well as certain employees of the federal government who are stationed outside the US. The three MARS programs -- Army MARS, Air Force MARS and Navy-Marine Corps MARS -- consist of a volunteer force of more than 5000 skilled Amateur Radio operators.

Editor's Soapbox

Mark Saunders, KJ7BS SKCC 2240T

Field day is right around the corner. What are you doing for Field Day 2008. Send your field day experience to us and we will compile them into an SKCC Field Day article. Did you form an SKCC Field Day group? Did you operate with another club? What was the funniest thing that happened? What was the food like at your Field Day event? Inquiring minds want to know. Send you Field Day stories to kj7bs@cox.net.

SKCC Contest Results

SKS Sprint

May 2008—Congratulations to John, K4BAI who placed first with Gary, K9MMS placing second and Cookie, K5EWJ a close third. Well done gentlemen. A special note for Russ, K0LUW operating the club call K9SKC, his score was second highest in points, but the club call is not eligible to place.

Editor's note: There is a growing contingent of QRP operators in the SKS.

WES Sprintathon

May 2008—Congratulations to Gary, K9MMS who placed first with Ed, KG4W placing second and Bert, W5ZR placing third. Well done gentlemen.

New Members

4406, WB4A, Richard, Morrow, GA
4407, N2KPR, Richard, Remsen, NY
4408, KD8IIS, Brain, Perrysburg, OH
4409, KC9KSN, Dan, Lake Geneva, WI
4410, WN2R, Fred, Waynesboro, PA

4411, AF6GF, Larry, Palmdale, CA
4412, AJ4SF, Don, Cameron, NC
4413, W6HF, Ken, Occidental, CA
4414, K1GDH, Ed, Webster, MA
4415, K4DXR, Andrew, Hendersonville, NC
4416, NI6B, Jan, Larkspur, CA
4417, IK6YXM, Matteo, Senigallia, Italy
4418, WB5JHC, Ray, Biloxi, MS
4419, AI5HF, Michael, Baton Rouge, LA
4420, N4LCD, Paul, Cartersville, GA
4421, KC4ZA, Alan, Gainesville, VA
4422, KA7BTW, John, Mabton, WA
4423, W5KMK, Kirk, Richmond, TX
4424, N7DHU, Merwin, Camano Island, WA
4425, WA7SEE, Bill, Rexburg, ID
4426, WD8DIN, Sis, Hendersonville, NC
4427, KI4TAW, Donnie, Brandon, FL
4428, K8HUG, Jim, Marietta, OH
4429, KI6ESK, Curtis, Lincoln, CA
4430, AI4AW, Chris, Moultrie, GA
4431, XE2ML, Martin, Durango, Mexico
4432, AB0BM, Gary, Quimbly, IA
4433, OE3SGU, Hannes, Amstetten, Austria
4434, NL7HJ, Ken, Denali Park, AK
4435, KC2BNX, Mike, Mahopac, NY
4436, KM4LT, Edward, Richmond, VA
4437, KB9ZES, Randy, Pembine, WI
4438, KK6JS, Joseph, Whitter, CA
4439, MM5PSL, Peter, Shetland,Islands, Scotland
4440, VE5DC, Jerry, Sintaluta, SK, Canada
4441, KB1QBZ, Jon, Stamford, CT
4442, VE3CJE, Norman, Sault Ste. Marie, ON, Canada
4443, K7VHV, Greg, Lake Stevens, WA
4444, K8KS, Kaz, Ann Arbor, MI
4445, K1ERB, Wayne, Dudley, MA
4446, K0EJV, Don, Lincoln, NE
4447, AA9BO, Jack, Indianapolis, IN
4448, W5LFA, Jerry, West Valley, UT
4449, M0KHZ, Kevin, Cumbria, United Kingdom
4450, K4NFX, Kelly, Grayson, GA
4451, WA3VYP, Roger, Aspers, PA
4452, W5EAC, Alan, Richardson, TX
4453, KS5JI, Gary, Lakeland, FL
4454, G4LMW, Rob, Berkshire, United Kingdom
4455, AJ8T, Ted, Sturgis, MI
4456, KE7ONQ, Buddy, Lolo, MT
4457, W7GCM, Gabe, Bellevue, WA
4458, KB4NDR, Jack, Greensboro, NC
4459, K7IUQ, Dan, Camano Island, WA
4460, N9WVM, John, Wabash, IN
4461, AE6GC, Jack, San Francisco, CA
4462, KB3QAA, Griff, ST. Thomas, PA
4463, W5ZXM, Jack, Tulsa, OK
4464, W5KF, Sam, Presque Isle, ME
4465, ZL2SWR, Radio Club Featherston, New, Zealand
4466, G4TPV, George, Bristol, United Kingdom
4467, KA3YGI, Ed, Oaks, PA
4468, K2UJ, Randy, Holland Patent, NY
4469, KE7LOQ, Donn, Centralia, WA
4470, K5FP, Fred, Marble Falls, TX

4471, VE4AEK, Bruce, Oakbank, Manitoba, Canada
4472, K0UJ, John, Ellendale, ND
4473, N4PRT, Patrickq, Pine Knot, KY
4474, VK4TJ, John, Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia
4475, N4WHK, Dennis, Statesville, NC

SKCC Awards

Centurion

215, NJ3Z, 3844C, Mike, Palmyra PA, 1 May, 2008
216, UU1AZ, 4344C, Jim, Crimea, Ukraine, 5 May, 2008
217, WI9X, 3204C, Jim, Belleville, IL, 20 May, 2008
218, AB3AP, 2607C, Mike, Avondale, PA, 27 May, 2008
219, N9QU, 3464C, Leo, Luxemburg, WI, 31 May, 2008
220, KH6OZ, 3975C, George, St. Ignatius, MT, 31 May, 2008
221, N6EV, 3358C, Paul, El Camino Village, CA, 31 May, 2008

Tribune

108, KM4VX, 3663C, Ron, Wilmington, NC, 28 April, 2008
109, W7GVE, 729C, Ed, Golden Valley, AZ, 03 May, 2008
110, KK0I, 2370C, Jack, Appleton, WI, 10 May, 2008
111, LW3EX, 3804C, Walt, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 11 May, 2008
112, K9MMS, 4291C, Gary, St. Charles, IL, 14 May, 2008
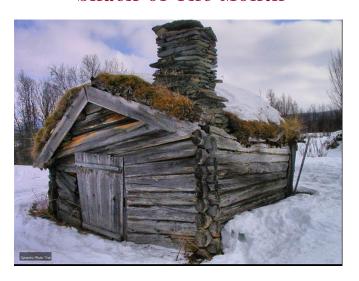113, N6VL, 2383C, Steve, Buena Park, CA, 16 May, 2008

Key Of The Month

Well, it kinda looks like something that you would find flat out on the highway and drying in the sun. It's the Yin of the Yang to my Madonna Key.

If you would like your key featured in Key of The Month, send your picture and a short description to kj7bs@cox.net.

Shack Of The Month

If you are expecting a photo of a radio shack, send your picture in. There are 4200 SKCC members and none want their shacks featured here? Email pictures of your shack with a description to kj7bs@cox.net.

QSL Of The Month

Send images of your QSL card and see them posted for all members to see. Email images to kj7bs@cox.net

Member Products

Wooden Key Bases

George Osier, N2JNZ, makes beautiful key bases for your keys. I have made bases in Redheart, Chechen and Santo Mahogany in 5/8 and 1 inch thickness. I finish the bases in Minwax Wipe On Poly Gloss which gives a great shine but doesn't make the wood look like its covered in plastic." Samples of the bases are on the SKCC YAHOO group under "photos" and then to the N2JNZ Keys Folder. These are made from exotic woods and some are almost too pretty to drill holes into for

mounting your key. Contact George gosier@twcny.rr.com for a list of exotic woods currently available. Key base pricing is $10 each plus $5 USPS Priority Mail shipping.

Her are two samples of his work. On the left is Redheart and on the right is Chechen.

These key bases are 8 1/2 inches long, 5 1/2 inches wide and 1/2 inch thick. These will make any key look good and will be a nice addition to your shack.

Gold SKCC Stickers

Mark Saunders, KJ7BS, is making Gold SKCC stickers available to all SKCC members. These stickers are 1 inch in diameter peel-and-stick gold foil stickers. The gold stickers come 63 to a sheet on an 8 1/2 x 11 inch page. The sticker has the SKCC key logo centered on the sticker and member numbers can be printed below the logo, including Centurion and Tribune designators. Pricing for the Gold SKCC stickers is very reasonable $0.60 per sheet of 63 plus shipping.

1 sheet (63) $1.19
2 sheets (126) $2.18
3 sheets (189) $2.78)
4 sheets (252) $3.38
5 sheets (315) $4.15
6 sheets (378) $4.75
7 sheets (441) $5.35
8 sheets (504) $6.12
9 sheets (567) $6.72
10 sheets (630) $7.32

(Prices include shipping)

Quantities over 10 sheets, please contact Mark for postage quote. Processing is 5-7 days excluding weekends. Orders and payments via PayPal to kj7bs@cox.net ,USPS money order or check to:

Mark Saunders
13226 N. 62nd Dr.
Glendale, AZ 85304

Please include the above pricing when ordering,

The SKCC Centurion

13226 N. 62nd Dr.
Glendale, AZ 85304
Phone: 623-606-1976
kj7bs@arrl.net

With SKCC every day is Straight Key Night!

The Straight Key Century Club is the fastest growing CW club focusing on manual generation of Morse code. Founded in January 2006, SKCC has grown to over 3700 members in calendar 2007. Members enjoy a very active email list server, SKCC forums, monthly sprints, and a monthly 24 hour operating event. Information about the Straight Key Century Club can be found at http://www.skccgroup.com .

Operating Frequencies

These are the suggested frequencies (+or - Khz) for SKCC members to congregate and look for other SKCC members. These are suggestions only, nobody owns any frequency. Be courteous and find a clear spot.

1.820 MHz	3.550 MHz	3.530 MHz
7.120 MHz	7.055 MHz	10.120 MHz
14.050 MHz	18.080 MHz	21.050 MHz
24.910 MHz	28.050 MHz	50.090 MHz
	144.070 MHz	

Operating Events

Monthly 24 Hour SKCC Operating Event: The first day of each month from 0000Z to 2359Z is designated as a monthly SKCC operating event. For SKCC members and non-SKCC members to work each other for credit. Contact with 100 SKCC members will qualify that person for a certificate of accomplishment. Visit http://www.skccgroup.com for more info or contact n6wk@n6wk.com.

SKCC Sprint: SKCC Sprints take place each month on the fourth Wednesday of the month from 0100z to 0300z. Rules for participation can be found at http://www.skccgroup.com/sprint/sks/.

SKCC Weekend Sprintathon: Every Second Sunday of each month beginning at 0000z UTC and ending 2359z UTC. This operating event is open to all licensed amateurs. Periodically themes will be announced for upcoming weekend sprints. See http://www.skccgroup.com/sprint/wes/ for more information and rules.

SKCC Member Resources

SKCC website—Everything you need to know about the Straight Key Century Club. Check back frequently as this site changes, http://www.skccgroup.com.

SKCC Yahoo Groups Email List—http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/skcc/. A moderated email list for the exchange of ideas about SKCC.

SKCC QSL Bureau—Dan Rhodes, KA3CTQ manages this free service for SKCC members. Send and receive QSL cards for QSOs between SKCC members via this service. To re-ceive your QSL cards, you need to have SASE (self addresses stamped envelopes) on file with the SKCC QSL Bureau. Dan also says non-members can send you QSL cards through the SKCC Bureau. For more information see http://www.skccgroup.com/qsl.htm.

Award Tracker—Don Kemp, NN8B (SKCC 0036) maintains an SKCC Award Tracker spreadsheet to assist members in keeping track of their current standings with SKCC awards. Don posts updates to this valuable tool in the files section of the SKCC Yahoo Groups http://groups.yahoo.com/group/skcc/files/.

The SKCC Centurion—The official newsletter of the Straight Key Century Club published monthly. The SKCC Centurion is posted on the SKCC site, in the files section of the SKCC Yahoo Groups site, and distributed via email to your email inbox. To join The SKCC Centurion email list, send an email to The_SKCC_Centurion-subscribe@yahoogroups.com with Subscribe in the subject. (304 members subscribed to electronic delivery)

Spotting Cluster—Phil, AI4OF (SKCC # 600) has launched a spotting cluster and is making it available to SKCC members. Use this spotting cluster to announce your operations or to find other SKCC members to work. Point your Telnet client to skcc.matrixlist.com:7300. Login using your callsign.

SKCC Sked Page—Andy, K3UK (SKCC # 1325) maintains an interactive web page where SKCC members can arrange a meeting with other members to work towards SKCC awards or just to rag chew. Check it out at http://www.obriensweb.com/skccsked/skccsked.php.