

Make This a Summer of DX Discovery

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Several of our columns this month focus on HF “newbies,” hams who are just getting started on the short-wave bands. Prime among them is N2OO’s DX column, a “DX Chasing Guide for Novice and Technician Licensees.” (Yes, believe it or not, there are still Novices out there!) Following the same theme, “Learning Curve” editor KOØZ writes about the basics of trap antennas, which are frequently the first “commercial” antenna many hams try, after a dipole; and WB6NOA dissects a trap and shares an innovative mounting method for a multiband vertical in his “Gordo’s Short Circuits” column.

I thought about calling this month’s issue an “HF Newbie Mini-Special,” but then I realized it ain’t just newbies. Solar Cycle 25 is rising at a delightfully fast rate, so far following a course predicted by a “maverick” solar physicist who thinks we’re in for a really super cycle. And Cycle 24 was so weak that anyone who has come into ham radio in the past decade (that would be roughly 300,000 of you) has never had the opportunity to enjoy a really good sunspot cycle. So articles on the basics of DX and DXing aren’t just for the newcomer to HF. They’re useful for nearly half our population.

If you have a General or Extra Class license, you have fantastic opportunities for DXing on all of our HF bands. But N2OO is reminding those of us with a Tech or Novice license that you don’t need to upgrade in order to reap the benefits of a hot solar cycle. **All hams have voice privileges** on the 10-meter DXing segment between 28300 and 28500 kHz. You can increase your DXing potential by learning Morse code and using the CW subbands — again open to **all hams** — on 80, 40, and 15 meters. And 6 meters is expected to be super this summer. So, even if you’ve been a ham for a decade but your shortwave success has been limited or non-existent, now is the time to start a summer of DX discovery on HF. And we’ve got the help to get you started, right in this issue.

Ham Eclectic

If DXing isn’t high on your priority list, don’t worry. The rest of this issue is an illustration of the incredible breadth and variety of amateur radio. We take you to Ohio for the in-person return of the Dayton Hamvention® and to Ecuador for a look at ham radio’s response to a massive earthquake there a few years back (as yet another big quake shook the region as we were preparing this issue). We look at really “green” power by using fruits and vegetables to power up a very low power (QRPP) transceiver. (Yes, this really is a “thing.” A few years back, I was sharing a table at a mini-Maker Faire with a display of power-producing produce!) And our columnists delve into the return of high-speed packet, getting more hams onto the microwave bands and more. There really is no end to the different aspects of our hobby, which offers something for anyone with virtually any technical or communication interest.

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Not so coincidentally, that is also the theme of KL7AJ’s new book, *Playing with Meteors*. No, it isn’t a guide to meteor scatter communications (although that wouldn’t be a bad idea); it’s about all the varied technical paths you can follow in ham radio, and vice versa — how ham radio can help you follow any number of technical career paths. The title is borrowed from my son, Dan, KC2OOM, who once explained to a skeptic asking why young people today would possibly be interested in amateur radio that no other hobby “lets you play with meteors.” So if you know someone who loves technology, but doesn’t yet know that he or she needs to be a ham, get this book as a gift!

Award Changes

CQ’s award program is taking another step into the 21st century while addressing some significant issues at the same time. As detailed in this month’s “Awards” column on page 79, as of September 1st, we will begin phasing out hand-lettered parchment certificates as the “standard” certificate for CQ awards. They will continue to be available, but as an added-cost option.

Going forward, the “standard” CQ award certificate will be a high-resolution PDF file — suitable for printing and framing — emailed to the recipient at the same time as the award letter (already done for WPX recipients; coming soon for WAZ, with CQ DX and USA-CA to follow later). This will eliminate the wait times that have been so frustrating for many award recipients (Thankfully, we are making great progress on eliminating the backlog). With ongoing supply-chain issues affecting the availability of parchment paper and flat cardboard mailers, along with constantly escalating costs, this is our only option at this point. Certificates already “in the pipeline” as of September 1st will be processed without imposing the added fee. Again, please see the Awards column on page 79 for details.

Improved DX conditions will help make it easier to earn these awards in the first place, so if you’re new to ham radio, new to HF, or new to Cycle 25 (that would be just about all of us), take advantage of the best “solar weather” we’ve had since the early ’00s — with great promise to get even better — get yourself on the air and make this a summer of DX discovery! May the sunspots be with you...

– 73, Rich, W2VU