If you go fishing, sooner or later, no matter how many days in a row you’ve come home with a minnow-sized catch, the waters will provide a bounty. The weekend of March 7 and 8 was one of those unexpected radio bounties!

Who’s Out There?
By any standards you care to use, this was a banner year!

DX QSOs with US-VE: 518,421 — up by 27%

US-VE QSOs with DX: 414,323 — up by 40%

Not only were more QSOs reported, but a higher fraction of US-VE QSOs were submitted to the log-checkers: 80% this year compared to 72% in 2008.

US-VE logs: 1491, up by 20%

DX logs: 1177, up by 45%

That’s a total of 2568 logs, up by whopping 25% in a single year!

The Bands Played On
The bands got a shot in the arm from the quiet conditions this year — much better on Saturday ($A_P = 1$, avg K = 0.3) and about the same on Sunday ($A_P = 8$, avg K = 2.6) than last year. That helps in two ways: first, the band openings are generally longer and stronger, and second, having a good first day keeps the interest level up for Sunday.

What was actually experienced this season was an ionospheric antipasto of conditions and abilities. Down on 160 and 80 meters, the low-banders took advantage of low D and E-layer absorption to rack up a few records as shown. For the middle frequencies of 40 and 20, propagation was classic F-layer, worldwide skip. Moving up, the propagation changed to very low-angle propagation on 15 meters, such as chordial hops and transequatorial modes. At the top of the HF spectrum, 10 meters took on VHF-like characteristics with sporadic-E ($E_s$) providing spot openings at southern latitudes. It’s not often that one weekend serves up such a smorgasbord for us to sample!

Write-up Notes and Features:
Look to the online extended version of these results (www.arrl.org/contests/results) for the following features:

Regional analysis for every Region and Continent.

A set of Top Ten call signs since 2002 is available as a downloadable PDF file.

Changes in QSOs and multipliers as a percentage of the 2002 totals are shown.

DX categories are being tracked from year to year.

A new accuracy plot displays score reduction against validated QSOs.

Soapbox is presented from all electronic logs.

Records
Record scores at the bottom of the cycle? Zounds! Four in North America and six elsewhere. KQ2M claimed two new 20 Meter, Single-Band records for all of US-VE in the CW and SSB weekends. Offshore, KH7XS set a thumping new Single-Band, 40 Meter World record! PJ2T now owns the Multi-Multi record for South America, as well. Four new European single-band records were set as CU2A (OH8NC, op) and CU2X (OH2BH, op) cleaned up on 20 and 80 meters. 160 meter records got clobbered by EA8AH from the Canary Islands, and by F6CTT in France.

K6LA set a new Canadian record in Single-Op, Assisted as VY2TT. WB9Z broke his old Single-Band 40 Meter record from 1991 and on 160 meters W2MF broke the Single 160 record from 1985, the oldest
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report broken. Figure 1 shows the variation in record-setting for all existing records.

Caveats

Spotting network connections (aka “packet”) are nearly ubiquitous in the contesteer’s shack. In fact, many logging software programs are configured to connect by default. If you receive any information from the spotting network about the operation of another contest competitor, you must submit your entry in the Single-Operator, Assisted category.

Remote stations are popping up everywhere along with the software and Internet bandwidth to support effective remote operation. Know the rules for remote operating: You must identify properly based on the location from which you transmit, you must be fully licensed to transmit from that location and have full permission from the station owner, and all receiving and transmitting antennas must be located at a single site.

US and VE Overview

There was a roughly 50% increase in the winning scores across the board. In many categories, the two or three leading scores were all greater than the 2008 top score! The Web version of the results shows how the Single-Operator entries were distributed across the categories.

This year was very good for the LP operators from 160 through 20 meters, especially for Single-Op, Low-Power operators. You can see the effect of the superb low-band conditions by the increase in the number of 80 meter and 40 meter Single-Band logs shown in Figure 2. Even with the excellent 20 meter conditions, some operators chose to drop down a band or two. The higher 40 meter and 80 meter log submissions balance the drop in 20 meter logs.

When conditions are decent, it might be the QRP stations that reap the greatest reward. NØKE made his first appearance in the QRP Top Ten and took home the top spot from Colorado. VA3DF continued his five-year run in the Top Ten, placing 2nd this year with 72 countries on 20 meters alone, ahead of 2007 category winner N1TM, making his 7th straight Top Ten appearance in third this year. Other new faces in the Top Ten include N7SS (op K6UFO in WWA), N4JU (OK), and W9KX (UT). N0UR returns to the Top Ten for the first time since 2002. The West was surprisingly strong this year with six of the ten table settings, including W6QU (op WA9ZU, SDG) and KA5PVB (WTX). The north-central region wasn’t left out as K78K (MI) and N0UR (MN) filled out the roster.

Single-Op, Low-Power is always a hotly contested category, regardless of conditions, placing a premium on geography. While two Texans, N5AW (NTX, 4th) and W5K (STX, 7th), corralled the middle of the Top Ten, it was N1UR (VT) claiming the top spot for the third time in four years — and he took off last year! WD5K was as far west as the Top Ten went, with no further representation from West until the 26th spot! N1PGA (WMA, 6th last year) and K2PS (SNJ, 7th last year) made a run and duked it out for 2nd and 3rd place, but well off the N1UR pace. N4TZ (IN) anchored the middle — his home away from home for six out of the last eight contests. N1SV (EMA) follows, returning to the Top Ten after a four-year absence. W1NT (WMA) is a new call in the Top Ten at eighth, prevailing in a very tight three-way race over regular Top-Tenners N4XL (SC) and W3LL (MDC) in 9th and 10th.

High-Power winner W2ZM (MAR, op K1ZM) looks to be mighty hard to beat. Repeating the results of his previous Top Ten appearance in 2002, K3MT operated K52D to a solid second-place finish. AA1K (DE) had his best finish yet, appearing in the Top Ten every year since 2002 when I started writing up the results — maybe with a few sunspots? Fellow Canadians VO1MP (NL) and Mr New Prefix VE3AT operating VC3A tied up the third and fourth spots: VO1MP’s fourth straight Top Ten appearance and VE3AT’s sixth! Westerner K3CR (op LZ4AX) retained 6th place on the list from WPA and it’s nice to see K3OZ following him after a three-year absence. Newcomers K1JL (VT), W3GQ (NC) and WYYSS close out the list this year.

Single-Op, Assisted winner W2RE’s (ENY) strategy clearly favored running and the 400+ QSO margin was enough to overcome the nearly 40 additional multipliers in the log of 2nd place NN3W (at the N3HBX station in MDC). There was a real horse-race for 2nd and 3rd, with WYYTT (op K6LA) setting a new Canadian record, but falling short of NN3W by the slimmest of totals. And then there is the annual run for the EPA roses between K3WW and AA3B. Each of these fellows has made the SOA Top Ten in seven out of the last eight years with K3WW prevailing in every head-to-head competition, but AA3B came as close as he ever has this year — stay tuned to see if AA3B will prevail in 2010! A bit farther west, there was a tight race as VA3DX grabbed 7th just ahead of N8TR (OH), before the Top Ten swung back east to K2PLF (ENY) and closed with N3AD (EPA).

US-VE Single-Band

This year there was a big surge of interest in single-band entries; 235 logs were submitted and that is an increase of nearly 80 over 2008’s 154 — up 50%! Figure 2 shows that 20 meter logs made up a lower fraction of the total due to increased interest in 40 meters and 80 meters. Even 15 meters grabbed a bit more of the pie. This is a very healthy trend!
Single-band entries are an excellent way to learn those unusual and marginal openings such as gray line and long path openings or even scatter modes on the higher bands.

Still somewhat anemic from the lack of solar UV, 10 meters is still a source of interesting propagation over any 48-hour period. Winner W5PR apparently soared up whatever propagation happened to be available from STX because he doubled last year’s winning score and handily outdistanced the rest of the crew. NA4CW (SFL) and K4W1 (AL) traded places from last year’s standings. This year, at least there were enough 10 meter logs to have a Top Ten — keep the faith! We actually have a Top Eleven with W8REG and WA0FQK tied in the 10th spot.

There were more life in 15 meters as shown by K4EA’s winning score from GA. QSOs were up by about 20% and multipliers by a third to near-DXCC levels — particularly welcome and it shows that it doesn’t take much “extra” propagation to work some good DX at any time of the solar cycle. K5TR (operated by WM5R in STX) squeezed in between K4EA and N4PN, also in GA, to grab second. While there was obviously a lot of empty space on the band, there was still enough action to fatten those scores “considerable” over last year and give K7BG the first rung of the ladder from up north in MT.

Last year’s 20 meter winner, K2XA (ENY), bulked up both his QSOs and multipliers, but it wasn’t nearly enough to withstand the charge of category winner and record-setter KQ2M (CT). The Top Ten was populated with entries from all across the US and Canada, a reflection of the great conditions on the “Queen of the Bands.” Third through 5th places marched across the continent to the southwest — VE3XN, W8ZN (OH) and W9EWD (LA) — before returning to W1NR in EMA. VE5XZ turned in a nice score from northern Saskatchewan. K8IA operating at N7AT in 8th and K6NHZ in 10th were the most westly scores. W9EYX almost came in 8th from IL.

The game has changed on 40 meters with the opening of 7.100-7.200 MHz to many ITU Region 1 amateurs. WB9ZL (IL) took full advantage to push his 1991 record up a notch and two or wriggle by last year’s winner W6Y1 (SDG). 3rd place WU2X (ENY) would have been last year’s winner! K4AB (AL) in 4th came in ahead of westerners W6PU (NM) and W6DBGZ (CO). A photo-finish between K8DJC (OH) and AC5O (LA) for 7th and 8th were followed by VE6YJ from Alberta and AC8Y on the East Coast in VA. It is good to see top scores from all over the continent.

Keeping up with the big score trend, KU2M (NNI) tripled last year’s 80 meter winning score that would have just squeaked into the box in 8th place this year! N0NI finished just behind 2nd-place AA4MM (NFL), almost
setting a new 10th-district record. 4th, place KM1R’s (CT) held off AA4V (SC) and N3YD (WPA). N8OO with a big score from south-central LA just nipped NJ1H (NH) and K0KT (IA). And how would you like to try to push the call sign W2/E78WW through the QRN on 75 meters?

Claiming the Top Spot on Top Band this year, W2MF (SNJ) moved up from 2nd-place last year with 50% more QSOs and a score to match, setting a new 2nd-district record! New Englander W1NA (EMA) took MF’s spot in second, while K5RX held fast with a repeat of last year’s 3rd-place finish just ahead of KK4SI (NFL). The quiet conditions spread the wealth around as N2WN appears in the box from TN before K1HAP (NH), W3GH (WPA), and VE3CUI restored normalcy. But zut alors! W7DR adds SV in 9th place from all the way west before VE2DWA closes out the Top Ten.

Multioperator

Multioperator, Single-Transmitter entries, once nearly ⅓ of all MO logs, now only make up half. 2009 brought a new call to the MO mix as K1LZ’s active and growing team appeared on top of the list from EMA followed by 2007 winner W3BGN returning to the MS mix. W1QA made it a three-peat in third. N1FD moved up five spots this year — that hard work paid off — followed by K1KI (CT) and last year’s 5th-place W6WB (EB) repeating as the West Coast representative in the category. KD9ST (IL) is the last western station in the list, followed by W2ZQ (SNJ), VE3RM, and W2XL (ENY) in 8th through 10th places.

“Multi-Two” continues to accumulate “market share” with a full third of the multioperator entries, its highest ever. A repeat in the top spot, W63C (EPA) is going strong after five years of Top Ten finishes, all at third place or higher. N3RS (EPA) also repeats in second place for the third straight year. Another consistent presence in the Top Ten box, the W4RM (VA) team placed third, followed by a new call, K8AZ (OH). Fifth place went to NR4M (VA) who edged KB1H (CT) and NE3F (EPA). Farther on down the list, K0TV (NH) made it six straight years of MS Top Ten, W5WMU (LA) entered as a team this year, and NK7U (OR) keeps the West Coast in the hunt with an entry from the relocated and rebuilding station.

After four years of finishing second to K3LR (WPA), W3LPL’s MDC team retook the top spot in the Multi-Multi high roller’s derby for the first time since 2002! Seven of this year’s Top Ten stations have “made the box” four or more times since 2002, including the 2009 inductee to the CQ Contest Hall of Fame, W0AIH (WI — 8th), WI1FJ (EMA) in 4th prevailed over K1RX (NH) who was locked in a tough race with K1TTT (WMA), followed by W3PP (DE). There are also three new call signs in the MM Top Ten this year; N6BV (EB — 7th), N8RA (CT — 9th), and WX3B (MDC — 10th).

Affiliated Club Competition

In the Unlimited Club category, it was the Yankee Clipper Contest Club reclaiming the top spot, breaking the 200-log barrier and zooming to a decisive victory! Frankford Radio Club and Potomac Valley Radio Club were 2nd and 3rd. Adding 37 logs, the Society of Midwest Contesters moved up to 4th place and serving notice that they might be challenging for the Sweepstakes gavel again this year, too. That’s how to do it — get everybody you can on the air and sending in their logs!

Even with fewer logs in 2009, the North Coast Contesters held off the howling mob to stay atop the Medium Club mountain. They were followed by the upwardly-mobile Mad River Radio Club (4th to 2nd) and the Hudson Valley Contesters and DXers (5th to 3rd).

A New Local category, the Southeastern Ohio DX Association, surged to the top and claimed the gavel with 7 big entries averaging nearly 3 Mpts each! In 2nd and 3rd are two other clubs that weren’t on the 2008 radar — the Kansas City DX Club and the Northeast Wisconsin DX Association. It goes to show that a Local club can form (or re-form) quickly and make a run at a national title.

DX Overview

The most appropriate remark to make from the DX point of view is, “Wow!” With 1177 logs submitted — a 45% increase over 2008 — and QSOs way up everywhere you look, the contest had to be even more fun from outside the US-VE boundary. It’s all about rate and volume of QSOs! 62 multipliers was the maximum number worked by any DX station this year — 63 is the maximum possible.

In second place last year, FSBE5 put together a very strong win in the SOAB-QRP category, adding nearly 50% to his score — his best, having placed in the Top Ten every year since 2002. Having made the Top Ten for seven of the last eight years, JR4DAH moved up from sixth to second — it’s always a struggle for Asian stations to place highly in the ARRL DX contests, so this is a nice finish, as for countryman JH1APZ in 4th. A new call in the DX QRP Top Ten, DL4VC9 made a debut appearance in third. The remaining six calls — MM3XXW, YO3JW, VK4ATH, OK1DVM, IZ2FME, and I5KAP — are all new to the QRP Top Ten; welcome! Unlike the LP and HP categories, Europe and Asia do quite well in QRP.

The Low-Power Top Ten was dominated by stations sprinkled around the Caribbean — seven out of the top eight spots. A tip of the author’s cap to the winner,
WK9A operating P40A as he has for a fifth straight year — to first place! The score of 5.55 Mpts would have placed a very close second in the SOAB-HP category! W5AJ piloted T15N to second place — his first Top Ten appearance since 2005. In third and cementing his WRTC-2010 credentials was H13TEJ following by K2P6RH (G3TBK, op) repeating his WRTC-2010 credentials was HI3TEJ.

Tables list call sign, score, and power (A = QRP, B = Low Power, C = High Power).

K2JE was the top African entry, V51YJ.

No EU representative last year, either — but P26MO (G3TBK, op) repeated his WRTC-2010 credentials was HI3TEJ.

The cost for plaques is $75 (includes shipping).

DX Single-Band

The farther south you are, the better 10 meter propagation to the US and Canada will be and LU1HF has won the category four straight times. Two of his countrymen followed as LU9DAG finished 2nd and LR2F 3rd. PU2MTS gave LR2F a sharp challenge, only nine QSOs and one multiplier off the pace. It was all South America for the rest of the way with the notable exception of HP1RIS making the box from Panama.

The 15 meter race was very tight with ZX5J forming a crowd and EA8BZX.

by OX2A. Just barely out of the Top Ten, JA0JHA leads all Asia HP entries in 11th place and EA8CDI was the top African entry in 13th position.

K2NG kept the southern Caribbean front and center from Curacao as first-place Single-Op, Assisted PJ4G outdistanced his Southern American competition. LT1F, ZX2B, ZP0R, and LF0Q formed a crowd in the midsection of the SOA Top Ten, as well, with EE7E squeezing into fifth-place. It took a great effort from Y9R9 to place 7th from the southern reaches of Eastern America. KL7Z signed KL7FHF, as he placed eighth from Alaska — another sign of good conditions. The Top Ten was filled out by two island stations, KP2BH and WP45K. JF2QMN led for Asia at 29th and EA8BZK was the top African. There were no entries from Oceania.

All five of the top spots in High-Power were traveling operators making a bit of fun for the folks back home while wrangling the pileups abroad. AE6Y made Aruba even more radio-active this year — at first place by giving the island a double-first place finish for the first time since 2005 when W2GD and WK9A pulled it off. KH6ND returned to the KH6YY station for his first Single-Op win in this contest since 2004. N2TK repeated his 2008 third-place finish and NH7A returned to TO5A for a sixth-straight Top Ten finish.

K2JL was the top African entry in this category — surprisingly hard to crack from across the Atlantic. Absent from the Top Ten since 2005, OA4SS is back this year from Lima, Peru. HP11W and KH6FI almost fought to a draw in 8th and 9th place while one of the Top Ten finishes by a Greenland station in recent memory was turned in...
Europeans filled seven positions in the Top Ten and North Americans three. JA7FTR was the top Asian entry in 29th place and Oceania appears in 33rd with AH7C with J5UAP leading Africa in 35th.

Big scores filled the 40 Meter Top Ten this year, led by KH7XS with K4XS at the microphone setting a new World record. Although ZL3A came close last year (and placed 6th this year), this is the first time in a while that an Oceania station has won the category. Truly a world-wide band, the continental representatives bounce around from North America in 2nd (KP4KE), to Europe in 3rd and 4th (2002 winner GW7X and S53F), to South America (YW5W), before returning to Oceania. Asia, on the other hand, has a tougher time with the interference from radar and other intruders on the band. UA0CM was the top Asian entry in 39th place and ZS4JAN was the sole African entry.

80 meters is another band that didn't show up in 2008. This year's Top Ten includes seven Europeans, two South Americans, and one Caribbean station. Congratulations to Old Timer OH2BH with a resounding win and record from the big CU2X station. GM3PPG fit comfortably in 2nd place in front of a closely spaced trio of YW4V, HG3M and EI7M. A bit farther east saw Polish stations SP3GEM and SN7Q finish 6th and 7th, before YV5MSG and WP4I returned the action to the Caribbean shores. IZ4NIC closed out the Top Ten this year.

The competition really heated up this year as the Big Guns decided to give Top Band a try. ZF2AH switched from 80 meters in 2008 to take the win on Top Band in 2009 ahead of 2008 winner KY4FZ who just barely eluded the clutches of F6CTT in 3rd. Europeans finally got a chance to join the fun as F6CTT's score is nearly 48 times larger than the top 2008 EU score! In fact all of the remaining Top Ten scores are from Europe and all are substantially larger than would have been possible in 2008. AO8A won 40 meters in 2008 and place 4th on 160 this year, the only African score and LU2DVI made a repeat appearance as the only South American score this year, but not in the Top Ten.

Europe returned to the single-band winner's circle with a vengeance on 20 meters, taking the first five positions and eight of ten slots overall. CU2A was operated well by OH8NC, placing first by a sizeable margin with a huge 3571 QSOs and a new record. A bit farther east, TM9R also found 61 multipliers, but wasn't able to keep up with the CU2A juggernaut. S50K and E76C ran a very, very close race for 3rd from the Balkan region and E71A wasn't far behind in 5th. NL7V broke into the Top Ten from Alaska — a rare occurrence on 20 meters.

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