TALES FROM THE SWAMP

April 2018

Author: Frank KG4IGC

From Your President:

Hello Swamp Foxes! As you all know, we had an advanced contesting class last month in Little Mountain, SC. I would like to thank Kevan N4XL for doing an excellent teaching job and giving a great presentation! On behalf of the Swamp Fox Contest Group I would also like to thank the Dutch Fork ARC for helping make this happen and loaning us their club room for the class. There was good attendance and the presentation was both educational and interesting. We picked up two new members after the class; I would like to extend a warm welcome to John J. Miller, N8EK from Jenkinsville, SC and also David Collins, AK4IC. There were quite a few new and interesting topics covered. Some of the subjects

covered included tips on S&P, running, prepping for a contest, using your rig to its fullest potential, propagation, N1MM features, & HF Terrain Assessment (HFTA). I have to say, I really enjoyed the class and learned a few new tricks of which I am currently working on incorporating into my operating practices. There is a possibility of another class in the fall, so if you are interested in attending, please let Kevan N4XL know so that he can get an accurate head count.

There are some pretty big contests coming up in the next week or so. For you RTTY guys, we have the Alessandro Volta RTTY DX Contest this upcoming weekend. The contest runs from 12:00 GMT Saturday May 12, 2018 until 12:00 GMT Sunday May 13, 2018.

For the QSO party enthusiasts we have the Arkansas QSO Party that will also be held this weekend, 1400Z, May 12 to 0200Z, May 13, 2018. There are two bonus stations this year, W5AHS Alpena High School Radio Club and WR5P, the Noiseblankers Radio Group. Each one of these bonus stations are worth 200 points! If you are new to contesting, this is a great place to start. QSO parties are a lot of fun and usually are a little more relaxed compared to some of the bigger contests.

The CQ World Wide WPX Contest, CW is right around the corner on May 26 - 27, 2018 0000 UTC Saturday thru 2359 UTC Sunday. For the new folks in the club, this is one of the bigger contests of the

year that we can pool all of our scores together as a club. If you plan to participate, please make sure that you set up your logging program with Swamp Fox Contesting Group as your club so that your score will be counted in the club competition.

Basically, there is a little something for everyone over next couple of weeks. Hopefully we will have lots of participation from our members and be well represented on the HF bands. These are some very active contests so plan of lots of activity from around the world on the HF bands!

Brag List:

WN4AFP: ARRL DX Contest 1st Place SC Section, SOLP 213,525 points

N4XL: 2017 CQWW CW **#1** 4th call area, #7 North America, #22 World, 1,304,595 points

Hamfests:

Goose Creek, SC

May 19, 2018 7AM-5PM; Trident ARC Goose Creek Lodge 401, 145 St. James Ave. *TI*: 147.27 Admission: $2.00 www.tridenthams.org

Xenia, Ohio

May 18, 19, and 20, 2018; Dayton Hamfest Greene County Fairgrounds, 210 Fairground Road, Xenia OH. 45385 *TI*: DARA Repeater 146.94 (-) 123.0 PL alternate 146.985 (-) 123.0 PL (937) 276-6930 info@hamvention.org P.O. Box 964 Dayton, OH 45401-0964

Member Contributions:

Frank Donnovan W3LPL

Cycle 24-25 comments[i]

Contributed by Kevan N4XL

Early Precursor of Cycle 25 Intensity

Progress to solar minimum and early precursors of Cycle 25 intensity

Solar precursors correlating solar physical phenomena with the level of future solar activity are much better indicators of progress towards solar minimum -- a broad phase of the solar cycle -- than forecasting a specific event such as the bottom of a broad solar minimum by observing the statistics of numeric values such as solar flux. They're also useful estimators of the future strength of Cycle 25.

Here's an example of how one solar precursor -- spotless days -- can be used to assess progress towards solar minimum.

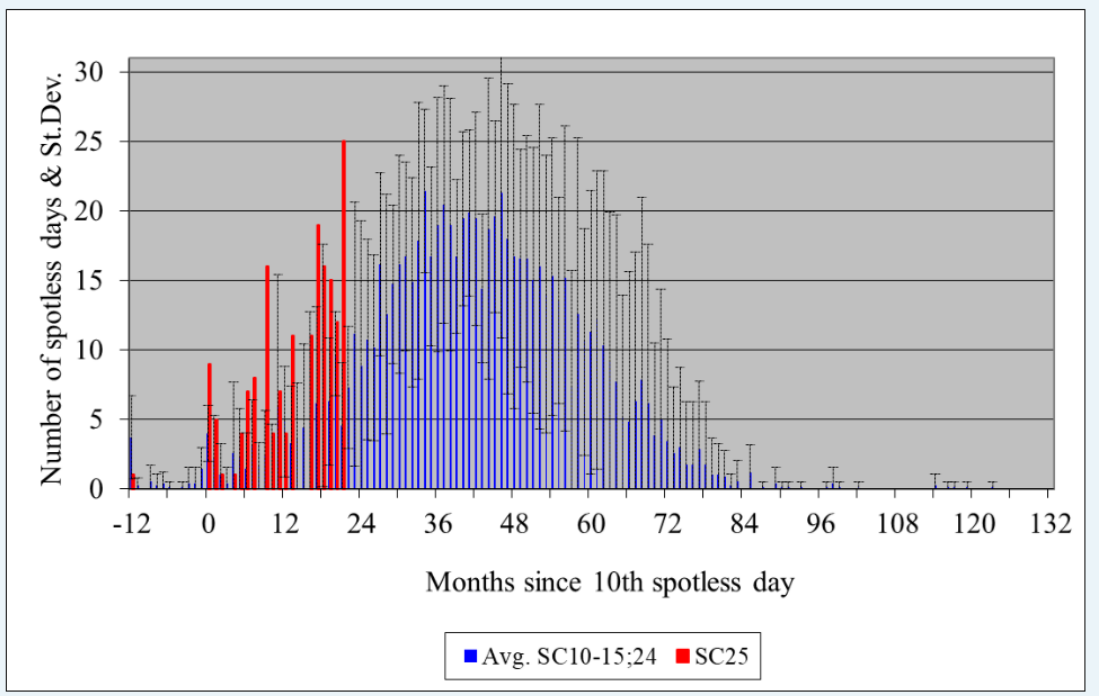
We entered the Cycle 24 solar cycle minimum with the onset of eight spotless days in June 2016. We had only 32 spotless days in 2016.

We had 15 spotless days in a row in March 2017, followed by relatively infrequent spotless days for the next seven months. The frequency of occurrence of spotless days accelerated in early November 2017 when we had 13 spotless days in a row followed by many more spotless days over the next five months. We had 104 spotless days during 2017.

The frequency of spotless accelerated again last month when we had 25 spotless days. We've already had 54 spotless days during the first 25% of 2018.

So where are we in our progress to solar minimum?

This chart shows the number of spotless days -- in red -- since the tenth spotless day of the onset of solar minimum in July 2016. Shown in blue are the average numbers of spotless days during sunspot minimums following weak sunspot cycles similar to Cycle 24. This data suggests that we may have just begun a period of very frequent spotless days for approximately the next two years.



http://www.sidc.be/silso/IMAGES/GRAP..._month1015.png

The next solar precursor is frequent long periods of spot-free days. We had a 14 spotless days in a row in 2016, 15 in a row in March 2017, 13 in a row in November 2017, and 14 in a row early last month. Long periods of spotless days will become even more frequent as we go deeper into solar minimum.

We'll see another important solar precursor after long periods of spotless days become more frequent. New high latitude, opposite polarity Cycle 25 sunspots will then begin to appear more frequently, perhaps by late next year. More frequent Cycle 25 sunspots will signal that we're approaching the bottom of the solar minimum phase of the solar cycle.

So what about the intensity of solar cycle 25?

An ongoing solar precursor of the future strength of Cycle 25 is the intensity of the solar polar magnetic fields prior to our current solar minimum. The good news is that the solar polar magnetic field strength is already slightly stronger than it was prior to the last solar minimum which suggests that Cycle 25 will be somewhat stronger than Cycle 24.

If the long periods of spotless days ends in about a year, it will be a solar precursor of a stronger Cycle 25. If it ends in more than two years it will be a precursor of a weaker Cycle 25.

73,

Frank Donnovan, W3LPL

Note: Another good source with further amplifying information beyond what is included below is the Yankee Clipper Contest Club May 2018 newsletter. You can find it at

http://www.pvrc.org/Newsletters/2018_05.pdf

Featured Article:

QSO Parties: What are they and why are they so fun?

By Frank KG4IGC

Many of you guys are quite familiar with the state QSO parties and participate in them regularly. I thought that I would take the opportunity to reach out to some of our newer guys who are not so familiar with these and explain what they are and why we enjoy them so much.

So what is a QSO party? In short, they are usually a one or two day weekend event that features hams from a particular state promoting VHF and HF activity from within the state. The rules vary from state to state, and a lot of times come with some very unique awards for a few lucky players. They usually vary from 12-48 hours depending on the rules for that particular contest.

QSO parties are a little more laid back as compared to much of the bigger contests that are held throughout the year. This makes an ideal starting point for the greenhorn contester. Let's use the SCQP as an example; the idea behind QSO parties is to make as many contacts and to work as many counties as possible within South Carolina. Hams living outside the state of SC would try to make contact with as many hams within SC. QSO parties are usually worked by hams that live within North America but many hams that live in other countries are welcome to participate as well. Pretty simple huh?

As with any contest, you can search and pounce or run to make contacts. If you are running, this gives you the opportunity to put your particular county on the air. If you prefer to search and pounce, you can work on not only the amount of Q's, but also collecting counties which is a good thing, as each county is a multiplier.

One of the great things about QSO parties is the opportunity to learn and have fun at the same time. Not only are you making Q's and mults, but you can learn more about your particular contest logging program and the many features it has to offer. You can study propagation, learn how to effectively break up that huge pileup, improve your operating skills, increase your QSO rates, and so much more.

What really makes it fun and interesting is chasing the mobile stations. These operators usually have a pre-planned route which a lot of times can be found on the states QSO party website. They travel from county to county putting each one on the air as they pass through them. Mobile operators really make the state QSO parties a lot of fun. There is nothing like the thrill of chasing these guys as they make their trek through the state putting new counties on the air. If mobile operation is your thing or something that you would like to learn more about, then perhaps you should give it a try in the

next SCQP. If you have ever wondered what it is like to be on the other side of a pileup, here's your chance!

Mobile operators help put many rare counties on the air which in turn helps in a couple of different ways. For the contest, it helps many of us to work many counties within the state that you would not normally hear and also at the same time increases your overall score tenfold (remember, counties are multipliers)!

Another advantage is if you are a county hunter. The United States currently has 3,007 counties and 137 county equivalents for a total of 3,144 counties. That is a lot of counties! There are many county hunters who spend YEARS trying to get that ever elusive Worked All Counties award. If collecting counties is your thing, these QSO parties give you that unique opportunity to knock those counties out state by state.

Contacts are not limited by mode either. Many of the state QSO parties allow for multiple modes including CW, SSB, and many of the various digital modes. This keeps the action rolling even when the bands are in bad shape. Not good at CW and cannot hear that SSB contact? No problem! Many operators put counties on the air using PSK31, JT modes, and RTTY. You can also listen out on the VHF bands and make a couple of contacts there as well if the band conditions are there. If you have never participated in a QSO party, you should give it a go. These short contests are very enjoyable and filled with plenty action. A list of state QSO parties can be found *here*.

Other News:

Frank KG4IGC introduced our two newest members, John N8EK from Jenkinsville, SC & David AK4IC from Landrum SC.

Kevin N4XL mentioned that he is working on setting up for SO2R at his QTH and asked if there were others in the club besides Bill N4IQ who are going the same route. A lively ongoing conversation has begun on the topic. Hans WU0B is in the process of going the SO2R

route as well, and has tried building his own controller using an Arduino Mega, but decided to use two SDR radios instead. Hans tells us that it is a simpler hardware configuration for digital and voice keying. He also plans to build his own interface to switch mic, PTT, and headphone audio.

Al NE4EA told us us that he was finally able to get his Hy-Gain AV-680 vertical back on the air with the help of his buddy from Tampa, FL, Norm KM4WPR. Al also has set up a really nice tilt over base for his antenna.

Tom W1TEF shared a copy of the April edition of the "Printed Circuit", a monthly publication of the Tallahassee Amateur Radio Society. Thanks Tom!

Phil N7IR informed the club that The 2017 CQWW CW final results are now online.

WN4AFP downloaded a program called Pileup Runner and has been having a great time honing his CW skills. This is a great little program to practice contest exchanges in CW. Another great program is Morse Runner, which gives you the options of creating QRM, QRN, QSB, and everyone's favorite, LIDS. Features include CW speed, pitch, RX bandwidth, runtime, QSK, and activity.

Kevan N4XL shared a review on the Icom 7610 from Eham by KC7UI. There seems to be an issue with the 7610 being deaf on the six meter band and unfortunately, Icom is unable to resolve the problem at this time. Perhaps down the line they will find a solution in a firmware upgrade.

Contests:

Georgia QSO Party

KG4IGC	SO (CW) LP	28 CW Q's		1,232 points
WN4AFP	SO (Mixed) LP	64 CW Q's	22 Ph. Q's	8,700 points

Florida QSO Party

WN4AFP	SOLP	262 CW Q's	55 Ph. Q's	116,958 points
KG4IGC	SOLP	93 CW Q's	11 Ph. Q's	23,184 points

Michigan QSO Party

N4IQ	SOLP	23 CW Q's	12 Ph. Q's	1,798 points
KG4IGC	SOLP	1CW q	0 Ph. Q's	2 points

Nebraska QSO Party

KG4IGC	SOLP CW	2 CW Q's		16 points

Ontario QSO Party

WN4AFP	SOLP	36 CW Q's	8 Ph. Q's	5,270 points
KG4IGC	SOLP	8 CW Q's	0 Ph. Q's	192 points

ARI International DX Contest

K7OM	SO RTTY HP	20 Q's	2,023 points

SPDX RTTY

N4IQ	SO(AB) HP (SO2R)	218 Q's	313,024 points
K7OM	SOAB HP		114,072 points

Indiana QSO Party

NI7R	SOHP	14 CW Q's		354 points
WN4AFP	SOLP	72 CW Q's	45 Ph. Q's	16,632 points
KG4IGC	SOLP	13 CW Q'S		286 points

7QP QSO Party

KG4IGC	SO(A)CW LP	88 Q'S	13,728 points
N4IQ	SOCW HP	100 Q's	14,400 points

Delaware QSO Party

WN4AFP	SOLP	5 Q's	1,080 points

New England QSO Party

NI7R	SOHP	101 CW Q's 0 Ph. Q's	7,070 points
WN4AFP	SOLP	14 CW Q's 20 Ph. Q's	13,500 points
KG4IGC	SOLP	72 CW Q's 0 Ph. Q's	14,608 points

CQMM DX Contest

K7OM	SOAB HP	61 Q's	2,848 points
KG4IGC	SOAB LP	9 Q's	64 points

SFOTA:

Current Leaderboard

2018 OVERALL STANDINGS

	CALL	Contests	CW QSO'S	SSB QSO'S	DIGITAL QSO'S	RTTY QSO'S	TOTAL QSO'S
1)	N4IQ	68	5625	289	0	3252	9166
2)	K7OM	21	729	596	16	2457	3798
3)	WN4AFP	51	1913	712	0	0	2625
4)	NI7R	8	1023	183	0	584	1790
5)	KG4IGC	15	346	676	0	571	1593
6)	N4XL	2	380	1037	0	0	1417
7)	NJ4F	7	437	20	0	887	1344
8)	WU0B	4	0	800	0	302	1102
9)	KS4YX	4	229	0	0	692	921
10)	KG6MC	2	82	620	0	0	702
11)	W4SLT	5	0	528	0	0	528
12)	NE4EA	5	222	46	0	0	268
13)	AJ4UQ	6	1	132	1	119	253

2018 INDIVIDUAL MODE STANDINGS

CALL	CW QSO'S
N4IQ	5625
WN4AFP	1913
NI7R	1023
K7OM	729
NJ4F	437
N4XL	380
KG4IGC	346
KS4YX	229
NE4EA	222
KG6MC	82
AJ4UQ	1

CALL	SSB QSO'S
N4XL	1037
WU0B	800
WN4AFP	712
KG4IGC	676
KG6MC	620
K7OM	596
W4SLT	528
N4IQ	289
NI7R	183
AJ4UQ	132
NE4EA	46
NJ4F	20

CALL	DIGITAL QSO'S
K7OM	16
AJ4UQ	1

CALL	RTTY QSO'S
N4IQ	3252
K7OM	2457
NJ4F	887
KS4YX	692
NI7R	584
KG4IGC	571
WU0B	302
AJ4UQ	119

Upcoming Contests:

NCCC RTTY Sprint, May 11, 0145z to May 11, 0215z; RTTY; Bands: (see rules); Serial No. + Name + QTH; Logs due: April 29.

NCCC Sprint, May 11, 0230z to May 11, 0300z; CW; Bands: (see rules); Serial No. + Name + QTH; Logs due: April 29.

SKCC Weekend Sprintathon, May 12, 1200z to May 14, 0000z; CW; Bands: 160, 80, 40, 20, 15, 10, 6 meters; RST + (state/province/country) + Name + (SKCC No./"NONE"); Logs due: May 20.

VOLTA WW RTTY Contest, May 12, 1200z to May 13, 1200z; RTTY; Bands: 80, 40, 20, 15, 10 meters; RST + QSO No. + CQ Zone; Logs due: May 31.

CQ-M International DX Contest, May 12, 1200z to May 13, 1159z; CW, SSB; Bands: 160, 80, 40, 20, 15, 10 meters; RS(T) + Serial No.; Logs due: June 13.

Arkansas QSO Party, May 12, 1400z to May 13, 0200z; CW, Phone, Digital; Bands: 80, 40, 20, 15, 10, 2 meters; AR: RS(T) + County, non-AR: RS(T) + (state/province/"DX"); Logs due: May 26.

FISTS Spring Unlimited Sprint, May 12, 1700z to May 12, 2100z; CW; Bands: 80, 40, 20, 15, 10 meters; FISTS: RST + (state/province/country) + first name + FISTS No., non-FISTS: RST + (state/province/country) + first name + power; Logs due: June 11.

WAB 7 MHz Phone, May 13, 1000z to May 13, 1400z; SSB; Bands: 40 meters only; British Isles: RS + serial no. + WAB square, Other: RS + serial no. +

country; Logs due: June 3.

4 States QRP Group Second Sunday Sprint, May 14, 0000z to May 14, 0200z; CW, SSB; Bands: 160, 80, 40, 20, 15, 10 meters; Member: RS(T) + (State/Province/Country) + Member No., Non-member: RS(T) + (State/Province/Country) + Power; Logs due: May 16.

Phone Fray, May 16, 0230z to May 16, 0300z; SSB; Bands: 160, 80, 40, 20, 15 meters; NA: Name + (state/province/country), non-NA: Name; Logs due: May 18.

CWops Mini-CWT Test, May 16, 1300z to May 16, 1400z, May 16, 1900z to May 16, 2000z, May 17, 0300z to May 17, 0400z; CW; Bands: 160, 80, 40, 20, 15, 10 meters; Member: Name + Member No., non-Member: Name + (state/province/country); Logs due: May 19.

RSGB 80m Club Championship, Data, May 16, 1900z to May 16, 2030z; RTTY, PSK; Bands: 80 meters only; RST + Serial No.; Logs due: April 27.

VHF CONTESTS

Araucaria World Wide VHF Contest, May 5, 0000z to May 6, 1600z; CW, SSB, FM; Bands: 6, 2 meters; RS(T) + six-character grid square; Logs due: May 11.

SBMS 2.3 GHz and Up Contest and Club Challenge, May 5, 0600 (local) to May 6, 2359 (local); Any; Bands: 2.3 GHz and up; six-character Maidenhead locator; Logs due: June 5.

Microwave Spring Sprint, May 5, 0800 (local) to May 5, 1400 (local); not specified; Bands: All above 902 MHz; six-character grid square; Logs due: May 19.

50 MHz Spring Sprint, May 12, 2300z to May 13, 0300z; not specified; Bands: 6 meters only; four-character grid square; Logs due: May 26

[i] https://dxnews.com/forum/forum/propagation-aa/9510-early-precursos-of-cycle-25-intensity