



April 2018

NEXT MEETING IS APRIL 10



ARRL

The national association for
AMATEUR RADIO®

Jim Pace, K7CEX, ARRL Northwestern Division Director, will join us for a presentation on what's happening at the League. Given the events of the last several months, it should be a lively meeting. You don't have to be an ARRL member to attend—but you really should be.

Rob's 125th Street Grill, 125th and Aurora Avenue North Dinner at 6:30 p.m., program at 7:30 p.m. Dinner is \$ 25 including tax and tip.

Please RSVP your dinner plans to Adam, K7EDX at k7edx@arrl.net

The President Speaks

Rob Fanfant, N7QT

I am currently visiting family members on the east coast as I write this article. It is unlikely that I will be back in time for next month's meeting, so I have asked Adam do the honors. This trip started out with great uncertainty due to several large back-to-back snow storms barreling towards JFK International airport prior to my departure, with 900 planes grounded only 24 hours before leaving.

Last month I had the privilege of working the HF Voyager (<http://www.jrfarc.org/hf-voyager>) on 20M using FT8. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this project, the HF Voyager is a wave glider (i.e., essentially a surfboard-like device that is propelled by ocean waves) that roams the world's ocean. Onboard electronics and satellite links allow the wave glider to be steered remotely. Onboard the HF Voyager is an amateur radio package consisting of a 5W KX3 HF transceiver providing amateur radio operators the opportunity for making HF FT8 radio contacts from some rather rare grid squares. The KX3 is powered by internal batteries that are charged by solar panels that line the surface of the wave glider. All the electronics are placed in a specialized waterproof container. What was interesting is that in order to save on power, the small Raspberry PI controlling the transceiver monitors the 20M FT8 band segment and doesn't call CQ unless directed by its control operator. Rather, it responds to those that call it and completes the QSO, autonomously. Daily the logs are uploaded via satellite to a web server allowing amateur radio operators around the world to verify their contacts. I was able to work this autonomous ocean-going drone as it approached the coast of Baja, though it has since changed direction and is heading back towards Hawaii.

I was so intrigued that I placed a phone call to one of its designers and we had a wonderful hours long chat on the both the legal challenges they faced getting the vessel an HF license and some of the hardware/software technical challenges they faced in designing an autonomous ocean-going vessel.

The conversation inspired me to let my mind wander to how this technology could be used in other ways. I recalled Bob Allphin (K4UEE) presenting at the 2016(?) Visalia convention discussing the possibility of dropping off a container full of radio gear at a remote site and running an expedition remotely via a SAT communications link, with the expedition operators located a world away from the actual remote site. A modified HF Voyager could theoretically do the same, but it would need an even smaller container, possibly the size of a cooler.

As news of the HF Voyager has spread among the amateur radio community, it's producing a tide wave of thought, emotions and comments about the future of ham radio.

Comments run the gamut of thoughts - some asking that such technology be banned, to those saying they would never work an autonomous device, to those strongly advocating for using this concept on difficult remote locations (i.e., think Bouvet), and everything in between.

In closing, the FT8 revolution continues to shake up the amateur radio community. The FT8 protocol can easily be implemented/executed by a \$35 Raspberry Pi. Add in a HF transceiver, a SAT or cell phone control link and HF antennas and you can now have a low cost amateur radio which can be placed at any location, worldwide. Will this technology ever replace expedition teams? My thought is...not yet.

Random Comments From the Editor

This has been an interesting month. It wasn't that long ago that the DXCC countries with a prefix starting with a "T" caused us to refer to them as the "Terrible Ts"—and with good reason. You could wait a year or more to hear one of them on the air and then it was usually a local resident with low power and a modest antenna. This, of course, led to bodacious pileups and lots of disappointed DXers. The last month or so, however, saw three—count 'em, three—DXpeditions to these countries: TN5R, TY7C and TJ2TT. Propagation was not great but the teams seemed to persevere nonetheless and thousands of QSOs were made, even for DXers suffering away in the Pacific Northwest. I did notice a very clear distinction between operators who were knowledgeable about propagation and those that were less so, in terms of targeted calls to NA or even W6/W7. I do know that all three teams were alerted to the propagation and other challenges that PNW DXers face but the message only got through to two teams. Having been on the DX end many times, I know that it's easier to work the low-hanging fruit—they are louder and your personal rates are good, earning the admiration of your teammates. But I admire those operators who both know that underneath the first two levels of loud signals are callers from disadvantaged areas of the world and that do something about it.

I have avoided so far even the mention of the FT8 phenomenon but I cannot stay silent anymore. To put it mildly, there is a difference of opinion of this new mode—whether it is really “ham radio,” or whether the ARRL should count FT8 QSOs for this award or that award. I guess in the abstract FT8 is like beauty—it's in the eye of the beholder. But when it gets personal, that's a different matter. It got personal the other day when Jeff Briggs, K1ZM/VY2ZM, posted a lengthy piece on the Topband Reflector about FT8. Jeff is the King of 160 and the author of a well-known book on 160 operating. His point was that it may not be too far away when the DX on 160 is all on FT8. If this is the case, the choice is no longer whether to work DX on CW or FT8 but whether to work DX on 160 at all. As if to prove this point, the 160 operator at 7Q7EI announced a few days into the operation that FT8 would be the only mode used on 160. Apparently they had local noise and I guess didn't think about that possibility before they go to Malawi.

I've not yet actually used FT8; what I know of it I got from watching a couple of "how to do it" videos on YouTube. Fortunately, John, KE7B, lives close by and I think I can wrangle an invitation to visit and watch him in operation. With the 160 season nearly over, I don't have to make any decision now. But it's starting to feel like a situation where your principles are your principles—until they're not.

No real news about Bouvet. I spoke with Bob Allphin, K4UEE, recently and he's already working on Bouvet 2.0. It will almost certainly be two years at best before they mount another attempt, this time going out of South Africa instead of Chile, and I suspect it may be a smaller crew and fewer stations. So far I've heard no rumors that it will be an all-FT8 operation.

I'm heading to Visalia later this month for the annual IDXC. I keep hearing lots of rumors about DXpeditions to Top 10 countries and Visalia is usually when they get announced so next month I'll report anything I learn.

Phone Contesting Tips For DX Contests

Andy Faber, AE6Y

[Editor's Note: Andy Faber, AE6Y, has been a world-class contester for many years and regularly ends up on the top of the list worldwide. You can see the history of contesting from Aruba at www.arubaqth.com This article appeared in the April Northern California Contest Club's JUG and is reproduced here courtesy of Andy Faber, AE6Y].

This article is prompted by the recent WPX SSB contest, in which I worked thousands of guys from Aruba as P49Y, which engendered much reflection (and teeth-gnashing, to be sure) about how U.S. hams can be best understood from the DX end. I'm not addressing this to relatively clear channel domestic contests but to the situation where you are trying to get through to a DX station that may be hearing a pileup, plus noise, ear-splitting splatter from adjacent stations and all of the other sonic annoyances that make many contesters prefer CW.

If there is no pileup and you know the DX station can hear you completely clearly, then you'll get through regardless, but if not, here are some suggestions:

First, be sure you are calling on his exact frequency. In CW contests, it can be helpful to separate yourself from the pack by calling off frequency, but that's not true in SSB. Off-frequency stations sound distorted and are hard to understand. The DX station may well come back to a weaker but more intelligible station that is on frequency, even if you are louder. In order to work you, he has to figure out which way to adjust the RIT, and then go ahead and do it. A tired operator on the other end may just not bother, until he has worked everyone else.

Second, make sure your audio is clean. It's so much easier to understand clear audio, even if it is weaker than a louder, distorted signal. KH7XS mentioned in his 3830 posting that this year there particularly seemed to be over-processed signals coming from South America, and I noticed the same thing. It used to be that the Italians were the worst offenders, but they seem to be better now. This weekend, the Cubans were particularly hard to understand. The prize for the easiest audio to understand goes each contest to the hams from the British Isles. The Gs, Ms and their derivatives invariably have very clean (and usually nicely treble) audio that can be understood even when the signal doesn't budge the S-meter. On several occasions I chose a weak but clear Brit over a loud, but distorted, competitor.

OK, so you have a clean signal and are calling on frequency, now how do you get the information through, both your call sign and your contact number (for WPX)?

Here are some tips:

If you are loud enough and have an easily recognizable call, you can skip phonetics. So this weekend, when K1AR called, he was easy to pick out; same for K3UA, K3ZO, N6AA and a few others. But for most guys, and when in doubt, use phonetics. Endless bandwidth has been expended on the subject of phonetics and people have differing opinions on the topic, but here are my thoughts from being on the DX end:

The first thing to understand is that the standard, "recommended" international alphabet works dismally in marginal conditions. The words are too short, and some don't have unique sounds. Generally speaking, the one-syllable, words just get lost, while the two syllable words are better, and the longer ones are even better.

Thus, one-syllable words like "Fox", "Golf" and "Mike" are horrible. Some of the two syllable ones are OK (e.g., "Hotel" and "Quebec"), but others, such as "Alpha" and "Delta", or "X-ray" and "Echo", "Kilo" and "Tango" sound very similar, so are easily confused. I worked a guy with the suffix XXE, and had to get a number of repeats until he finally said "X-Ray X-ray Ecuador" which did the trick.

There are two basic cures for these problems. The first is only to use these crummy phonetics the first time as a trial. If the DX station asks for a repeat, say your call twice, once with the standard phonetics and once with different ones. Don't just keep repeating your call the same way. Something in either the way you say it or the way the DX hears it is creating ambiguity. If you keep repeating the call the same way, it may well be that part of it is just hard to decipher, and it may not get any easier.

If the DX station is a good English speaker, then custom phonetics may work, such as "King George Six..." In fact when I thought a KK4 station was a K4, he used a very effective

phonetic, “King Kong Four...” WA2JQK uses “Jack Queen King” in domestic contests, but that won’t work well for non-native speakers. The Wyoming station N7MZW uses “Many Zebras Walking” sometimes domestically, but I noticed he was using normal phonetics in WPX.

The second approach is to switch to the geographical phonetic alphabet. This features longer and more distinctive-sounding words, which are much easier to understand. For example if your suffix is, say, HLF, then you can say “Hotel Lima Fox,” then try “Honolulu London Florida.” When I give my call with last letter “Yankee” and get asked for a repeat it works much better to say “Last letter Yankee”, last letter Yokohama.” Many of the geographic phonetics work particularly well for speakers of Romance languages like Spanish and Italian (e.g., terms like “Guatemala”, “Nicaragua” and “Santiago”). There are a few letters for which there are not good geographic equivalents. Obviously, “X-ray” is one of them. For “Echo”, “England” is sometimes used, but “Ecuador” is better. Although “London” and “Lima” are both geographic terms, “London” is much better. And “Denmark Mexico” is many times superior to “Delta Mike.”

Numbers in the call sign can also cause trouble. What if the station comes back to “K3” instead of “K6”? In general, just try to repeat the number, but if he still doesn’t get it, you can try counting, e.g. “Kilo Six, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.” Or for us West Coasters, “Kilo Six in California, West Coast” can be useful.

Which brings me to the subject of numbers in exchanges like WPX. I commented in a 3830 post a few years ago that the English numbers that everyone uses are just too ambiguous, most of them being plain too short. I recommended using some Spanish numbers, like “cuatro” and “ocho”, but that suggestion went nowhere so I hereby drop it, unless you are trying to get through to a native Spanish or Italian speaker. In fact, in WPX, I just couldn’t understand a number from a CO8 station with terrible audio. I kept asking, “your number 424?”, “your number 242?”, “your number 224”, etc. Normally, one doesn’t confuse “two” and “four,” but this guy’s audio was driving me crazy and I wasn’t sure how well he was understanding me either. Finally I had the presence of mind to ask in Spanish, and when he said “dos cuatro cuatro,” he was in the log. If he had said that in the beginning I would have understood him in spite of his maladjusted audio.

One source of confusion for the DX station is not knowing how many digits there are, particularly later in the contest when a number can have 1, 2, 3 or 4 digits. There are a couple of ways to help. For example: suppose the DX station thinks he hears “[garble] six six” and he asks: ”your number six six?” If your number is just 6, you can say to be helpful “Negative. My number zero zero six, number six.” Adding the word “number” in front of the digit indicates there are no missing digits. If your number is 66, just say “Roger, roger.” If it’s 56, say “Negative, number five six, fifty-six.” If it’s 256, say, “Negative. Number two five six, two fifty-six (or even “two hundred and fifty-six”). I know we were taught that it is incorrect to say

“two hundred and fifty-six,” and we should just say “two hundred fifty-six,” but using the “and” makes it more intelligible.

In general, it’s usually best to say your number twice, in two different ways. For example it’s often hard to discern “two three” from “three three”. So you can say: “five nine, two three, twenty-three,” since “twenty” and thirty” sound very different. Similarly, if your number is 15 and you say “one five”, that might be confused with “one nine”, so say “one five, fifteen.” If it’s late in the contest and you might be expected to have a three-digit number you can say “zero two three, only twenty-three” And if you have a one digit number late in the contest, it’s best to add zeros, saying, e.g., “zero zero nine, number nine”, not just “nine.”

I hope these tips from the DX end are helpful. They should be even more useful in the next few years, as declining sunspots force us increasingly into the QRM alleys of 20 and 40 meters.

2018 Pacific Northwest DX Convention

It’s not too early to start making plans for the PNWDXC this summer. The website is at <http://pacificnwdxconvention.com/> The dates are August 3-5, 2018.

The convention hotel will again be the Inn at the Quay in New Westminster, B.C. The hotel is now accepting reservations—you can call toll-free 1-800-663-2001 and let them know you are coming for the Pacific Northwest DX Convention. Or send an email to info@innatthequay.com, mention you are attending the convention and they will email you a confirmation. I went the email route and got a confirmation about three hours later. The convention room rate on my confirmation is Canadian \$ 165 plus tax. At today’s exchange rate, that works out to around \$ 134 per night.

Contest Activity Report—April 2018

Mike “Dink” Dinkelman, N7WA

Here is the activity within the Club for March:

ARRL SSB DX TEST

Call	QSOs	Mults	Op Time	Score
M/S HP				
N7QT	406	139	12:48	169,302
SO Unlimited HP				
K7RL	1494	242	28	1,084,644
W7VAS	104	57		17,442
WC7Q	38	17	1.5	1,938
SO Unlimited QRP				
K7SS	85	36	4:45	9,180
SOAB HP				
N7ZG	1033	206	38	638,394
KZ1W	456	138	15.3	188,370
KD7H	75	31		6,975
KK7PW	24	6	3	432
SOAB LP				
W7OM	212	85		54,060
SOSB/20 QRP				
K7HBN	50	18	5	2,700
SOSB/40 HP				
W7WA	814	85		207,570

ARRL SSB DX TEST Soapbox

KD7H: Rig: IC-756PROII + IC-2KL; ground-mounted Hustler 6BTV vertical. This contest was quite challenging with the poor conditions and my ground-mounted vertical.

K7RL: I had every intention of making this a full-time, serious effort, but short openings and long periods of painfully slow rates turned it into a semi-serious effort.

10M and 15M were greatly missed. No EU and almost no JA on 15M. In fact, 15M didn't really open until about noon, local time, and then pretty much closed about four hours later. Cracking a pile-up was absolutely brutal. I'm certain anyone with 5 watts and long wire beat me. Rough.

KH7M was my only Q on 10M. Talk about being at the right place at right time. It was really just that quick before he was gone and faded into the noise.

20M was wall-to-wall with layers of stations trying to find a space to operate. Saturday's opening to EU was excellent. Sunday was good too with many loud 100 watt stations calling in, but maybe participation was lower on Sunday? That's how it felt.

The strongest EU opening on 40M was the first night, before and around local sunset. Signals started to fade once the sun went down, so there was an urgency to work as many multipliers as possible before they disappeared.

A low Q and mult total on 80M masks working some great DX. Special thanks to ZS1TMJ for a nice long haul QSO. The second night featured a somewhat broader EU opening which was very cool, even if it meant several minutes of calling to get the operator's attention.

160M is still a pain in my \$ss. I'm still working to improve my signal and receiving abilities. Thanks to all for the Qs.

KZ1W: First SSB contest with this rig (Flex Maestro/6700) so mostly an effort to figure out how to run it in a contest. A ways to go with my learning, but there are several bugs and it still lacks some desired contesting features. It has been a real PITA to get this far. However, the receiver is plain awesome in its ability to uncover signals thru layers of QRM and QRN.

W7WA: Saturday morning 40 remained open later than usual, pounced on an unsuspecting low power XX9CM who was calling CQ at 17:06Z.

N7ZG: Always fun when interesting DX calls in during your runs. E2A called in on both 40/20 runs. H44MS, V51JP and 9J2MM called in on 20M run.

Didn't hear much EU on 80 except for GM3PPG. He was loud and worked him easily. Seemed a bit strange. Fun moment. Not much JA action on 75 and 40M was a bit light. 15M to JA was almost non-existent. 15M was way down compared to the CW weekend.

Good rate to EU on Sat. morning. Finding a run freq was tough on Sunday morning. Good fun!

KK7PW: Short time, great fun!

W7OM: A real slog with LP.

CQWW WPX SSB

Call	QSOs	Prefixes	Op Time	Score
M/S HP				
KZ1W	2373	680	48	2,851,290
WR5J(@K7RI)	2346	621	48	2,491,452

M/S LP

KK7PW(@K7SS)	748	378	25	459,270
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SO(A)AB LP

W7OM	273	173		87,365
KB7HDX	181	131		36,418

SOAB HP

KW7Y(K7RL)	3211	922	36	5,355,898
WC7Q	94	81		13,203

SOAB TB-Wires HP

KX7L	70	57	4	8,037
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SOSB15 QRP

K7HBN	21	21	3	693
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SOSB20 LP

N7BK	200	173	13	63,837
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SOSB20 TB-Wires LP

WV7S	86	74	4.5	11,988
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CQWW WPX SSB Soapbox

KZ1W: EU is always a challenge from Seattle. JA runs were just OK. 15 opened a bit to SA. Thanks for all the newbie contest ops that gave us Qs

KW7Y(K7RL): 20M clearly had the most action. 80M was much better to JA than 40M. In fact, 40M was quite poor to Japan. Heard guys down south working JAs I couldn't hear.

Lost the top 40M 4 element monobander of my 4/4 stack to storm damage and age, but was able to use the lower antenna. This is definitely a year for station maintenance.

Thanks to all for the Qs and the real KW7Y for the use of his great call.

KK7PW(@K7SS): Casual 25 hour multi in West Seattle. Pro II, Steppir 3el, Wires

WR5J(@K7RI): 20 and 40 meters were the money bands. Really good runs on both bands, especially 40 meters to stateside, but poor to Japan. In fact 75 was better to JA than 40. Lots of rapid QSB taking stations in and out on 20 meters. Thanks to Dennis, Walt and Curt for sticking with conditions that were less than great. And thanks to everyone who worked or tried to work us.

Membership Update—April 2018

Jim Hadlock, K7WA

The Western Washington DX Club welcomes one new member this month:

Josh Saran, N7WPM of Kirkland

Thanks to everyone who helped with the Club Information table at the Mike & Key Fleamarket: Rob, N7QT; Adam, K7EDX; Rich, W6RS; John, KE7B; Kirk, N7UK; Mike, K7SR. And thanks to all the Club members who came by to say "Hello" - it's always great to touch base with so many of you!

John, KE7B, has invited us to join a WWDXC Facebook group - look at his post on the YAHOO Group reflector. Thanks to John and Ben, K7AAD for updating the Club website. It's still a work in progress but looking very much improved. Comments go to John or any Board Member.

I think we are finally through winter and spring and summer are on the way. That means antenna work, Field Day, the WWDXC Picnic and the Pacific Northwest DX Convention. And good DXing!

April 2018 Contest Calendar

Bruce Horn, WA7BNM, has a website that is truly a one-stop place for all things related to contesting. The link is www.contestcalendar.com or Google "WA7BNM" and the first hit is Bruce's site. With just a few clicks, you'll find everything you need to know about every contest, large or small. I find it very useful when I hear a station that I want to work that is obviously exchanging contest reports and I don't know the exchange.

DX Alert Nodes

Bob Nielsen, N7XY (n7xy@n7xy.net)

Current DX Node telnet addresses:

W7PKT- w7pkt.net, PORT 7300

VE7CC-1 145.71 MHz or telnet to dxc.ve7cc.net, port 23

WWDXC DXCC Ladder

Jim Rockey, WA7SRZ

The WWDXC DXCC Ladder is maintained on the website. You can find it by clicking on “DXCC Ladder” on the homepage or by going to <http://www.wwdxc.org/dxcc-ladder-2/> and clicking on “click for dxcc ladder” The Ladder is published in the Totem Tabloid once a year in the January issue. Please send your updates to me at wa7srz@frontier.com.

DX Info Sources

John Owens, N7TK (jcowens1@comcast.net)

Discovering what countries (sorry, “entities”) are currently operating on the bands and getting a confirmation (QSL or LOTW) once you work them has become easier in one sense with the flood of electronic information and more difficult in another sense, as the amount of available information is almost overwhelming. Below are some very useful websites that will help solve these problems. If you have other sites that you have found helpful and think should be on this list, please send the info to me at jcowens1@comcast.net and I’ll include it in future issues.

Useful DX Sites

The Daily DX (www.dailydx.com) (subscription service but can’t be beat for timely info)

The DX Zone (www.dxzone.com/catalog/)

Internet Ham Atlas (www.hamatlas.eu)

Announced DX Operations

DX World (<http://dx-world.net>) (look for the “DXW Weekly Bulletin”)

NG3K Amateur Radio Contest/DX Page (www.ng3k.com/Misc.adxo.html)

DXing Info (www.dxing.info/dxpeditions)

Ohio/Penn DX Bulletin (www.payays.com/opdx1044.html)

QSL and Manager Info

Pathfinder (Pathfinder.exe) (<http://www.dxlabsuite.com>) (Click on QSL Info)

QSL Manager Lookup (www.IK3QAR.it/manager)

K3WWP QSL Routes (http://home.windstream.net/johnshan/dx_ss_qsling.html)

HamQTH Callbook (www.hamqth.com/)_

ORCA DX and Contest Club (www.orcadxcc.org/index.html) (Good access to QRZ.com)

Global QSL (Card design and bureau QSL service-print and mail) (www.globalqsl.com/)

Announced DXpeditions

Here are the DXpeditions and dates I have in my calendar as of April 3, 2018 (with no representations that the information is accurate, complete and/or won't change). I have added the DXpedition website information when there is one and I have the information. If no website is listed, check the call sign on QRZ.com.

Bhutan (A5A)	April 4-11, 2018
Agalega & St. Brandon (3B7A) http://www.saintbrandondx.com/en/	April 5-17, 2018
Kosovo (Z66D) https://www.qrz.com/db/Z66D	April 15-22, 2018
Mozambique (C8T) https://mozambique2018.wordpress.com/	May 2-15, 2018
Lord Howe Island (VK9LI)	May 11-18, 2018

Here are the sites and bulletins I look at to find out what's happening on the bands:

The Daily DX	dailydx.com (subscription and free trial available)
DX World	dx-world.net (free)
NG3K Page	www.ng3k.com and then click on ADXO at the top (free)
DX Summit	www.dxsummit.fi (free)
DXScape	www.dxscape.com (free)
DX Heat	https://dxheat.com (free)

Totem Trader

FOR SALE: Vintage 1950s National Receiver: **National HRO60** with coil. Project. Fixer. Email for photos. \$99. Pick up West Seattle. K7SS. Dank7ss at Gmail dot com

FOR SALE: MFJ-434 deluxe voice keyer with manual \$80

MFJ-927 200 watt remote antenna tuner. Great for Field Day. Works very well, with manual. \$150

Oscilloscope, 175 MHz, dual channel, dual time base. Phillips PM3286 \$150

Larry, K7EK k7ekd@frontier.com

FOR SALE: TS-870 \$600-- serial no. 71000015-- for sale by original owner K7QQ in Gig Harbor area. In working condition, and includes original manual, double boxes with the foam inserts. Ask for Dan at 253-884-9396.

TOTEM TABLOID

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Joining the Western Washington DX Club

To join the WWDXC or sponsor a new member, please send an SASE for a membership application form to the WWDXC, P.O. Box 395, Mercer Island, WA 98040. Annual dues, including a subscription to the *Totem Tabloid*, are \$25.00.

Internet Access

Information on the Western Washington DX Club is also available on the internet at www.wwdxc.org