

Natural Radio

News, Comments and Letters About Natural Radio

February 2001

Copyright © 2001 by Mark S. Karney

I know that this is the prime season for Beacon Hunters and Lowfer enthusiasts, but I think the cold and snow has kept the Natural Radio listeners away from their favorite quiet sites. Fear not, the Spring Equinox is coming and a new website by NASA may help relieve the winter boredom. Also, check out Scott Fusare's receiver article in this issue and do some work on your equipment while waiting for the snow to melt at your quiet site.

Spreading the Word I had an interesting inquiry this month from a young man doing a science project relating sunspots to disruption of radio communications. We wrote back and forth several times and hopefully I gave him some information that will be useful to his project. It got me thinking, however, of what we are doing to draw other people into this hobby and the LWCA. Personally, I haven't done much outside this group to promote our hobby -- but I've gotten a couple of ideas. Talk up the hobby to friends and if you know any teachers tell them about *Inspire*. *Inspire* has a lot of resources for schools and teachers are always looking for projects that will add interest to a class. Refer them to the site at: <http://image.gsfc.nasa.gov/poetry/inspire/>

If you have a table at a hamfest, why not devote a corner of the table to your hobby? Put out some LWCA membership applications, a sample copy of *The Lowdown*, and maybe set up a longwave receiver or have some natural radio receivers on display. This will definitely spark some conversations. A couple of years ago I set up a few crystal sets at a hamfest. (I'm also a member of The Crystal Set Society) Hardly anyone who walked by the table could resist putting the earphones on. It generated a lot of good conversation. I think a beacon receiver or a natural radio receiver would do the same thing. Let's try and keep our hobby alive and growing.

Dayton Hamvention The Dayton Hamvention will be held this year on May 18th, 19th & 20th at its usual location at Hara Conference & Exhibition Center. Last year I had the good fortune of meeting with a couple of LWCA members and spent evening swapping stories. If any of you are going, it might be nice to get a group of LWCA members together for breakfast or dinner. If you're interested, let me know and I'll try to organize something.

Armchair Listening Of Whistler Sounds Now Possible Online The wish that we all have had of being able to do Natural Radio Listening from the warm comfort of home is a step closer. If you have an internet connection you can now listen to a VLF radio anytime you wish. Dennis Gallagher, a space physicist at the Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC) and colleagues recently installed an INSPIRE VLF receiver at the MSFC Atmospheric Research Facility in Huntsville, AL. It's broadcasting the peculiar songs of Earth live on the web 24 hours a day. Gallagher built the online receiver from an INSPIRE VLF radio kit. The web address for the site is:
http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2001/ast19jan_1.htm

I listened to the site several times this weekend, but all I was able to hear was a very resonant hissband. I will do some more experimenting this week and would like to hear from anyone who tries out the site.

This could be a really great resource for having a 24 hour per receiver in a quiet location to correlate with your own listening efforts.

Coordinated Listening With the temperature here in single digits, it's hard to believe that spring is around the corner – but the Spring Equinox coordinated listening time is upon us. The coordinated listening weekends are as follows – March 18 & 19 and March 25 & 26. The critical listening time is 1100 hours. This is near sunrise on the East Coast, which will allow results across the US to correlate. Unfortunately that means a very early listening time for those on the West Coast. I'll publish the details of logging and so on next month.

I didn't get any response to Shawn Korgan's request for more coordinated listening dates. (I guess everyone has been huddled up in front of the fireplace.) However, in response to last month's column and Shawn's correspondence this month I would suggest the following – when you are out listening, and there is some interesting activity going on, try to log or record the first six minutes of the hour as we do for our normal coordinated listening. This will increase the chances of getting useful correlated data.

Your Much Appreciated Correspondence

•**Shawn Korgan, Gilcrest, Colorado (korgans@mymailstation.com)** I like your idea Mark, about a coordinated listening/taping effort when the Kp index rises above 5 and a start time being the time of sunrise on the East coast. Maybe as a group we should make this part of our standard procedure? It's a great starting point for coordinated listening efforts.

I'm wondering how many of us are capable of receiving e-mail and if the possibility of using e-mail might be a good way to keep in contact as a group? I've been in similar efforts as this one where the moderator or leader would receive the e-mails from listeners and then forward the comments/e-mails to everyone in the field.

I made it out the morning of January 12th for an experiment with a giant weather balloon. I launched the balloon off with 200' of 22 awg wire attached to it. All I can say is that it worked terrific! I've experimented with (horizontal) longwire antennas up to 1000' in length but never with anything over 25' in length in the way of a vertical antenna. I plan to do more testing with weather balloons this spring once the weather warms up. With the 200' vertical antenna, I was definitely able to hear chorus and whistlers which an eight foot vertical antenna (mounted on my car) was not capable of receiving.

For anyone that is interested in having solar conditions sent automatically to your e-mail mailbox, just send an e-mail to: majordomo@dawn.sec.noaa.gov. In the body of the message type on a single line the following: `subscribe wwv-list` and then type in your e-mail address. Example: `subscribe wwv-list brown@aol.com`. That's all there is to it. Now, you will automatically receive solar conditions delivered to your mailbox every three hours. You may also visit their web site for more details. <http://sec.noaa.gov/ListServer.html>.