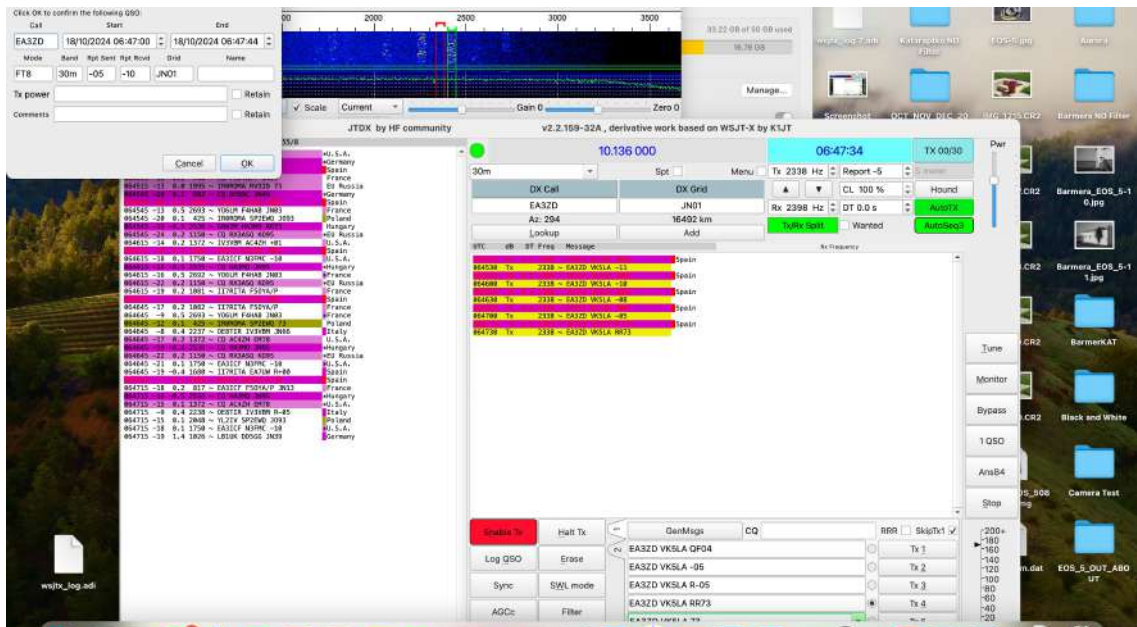


Park Activating using CW and Digital Modes

Expand your Dxpectations!

Andy, VK5LA October 2024

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Caption

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Why would I use CW or a Data Modes in a WWFF Park?

Isn't CW dead? Doesn't everyone love to hate FT8?

- CW is ideal for situations where a lower power QRP style radio is used to activate due to weight restrictions, say when hiking into remote parks and summits where vehicle access is either impossible, impractical or prohibited.
- CW/FT8 will often work better than SSB for the same power level in marginal conditions, especially at <5 watts
- CW and FT8 will yield you plenty of DX for your log, and stations will line up to work you!
- FT8 has become enormously popular, and there are more stations than ever on CW!
- It's realistic these days to qualify the park with your 44 without saying a single word into a microphone! Especially if you're running 25+ watts

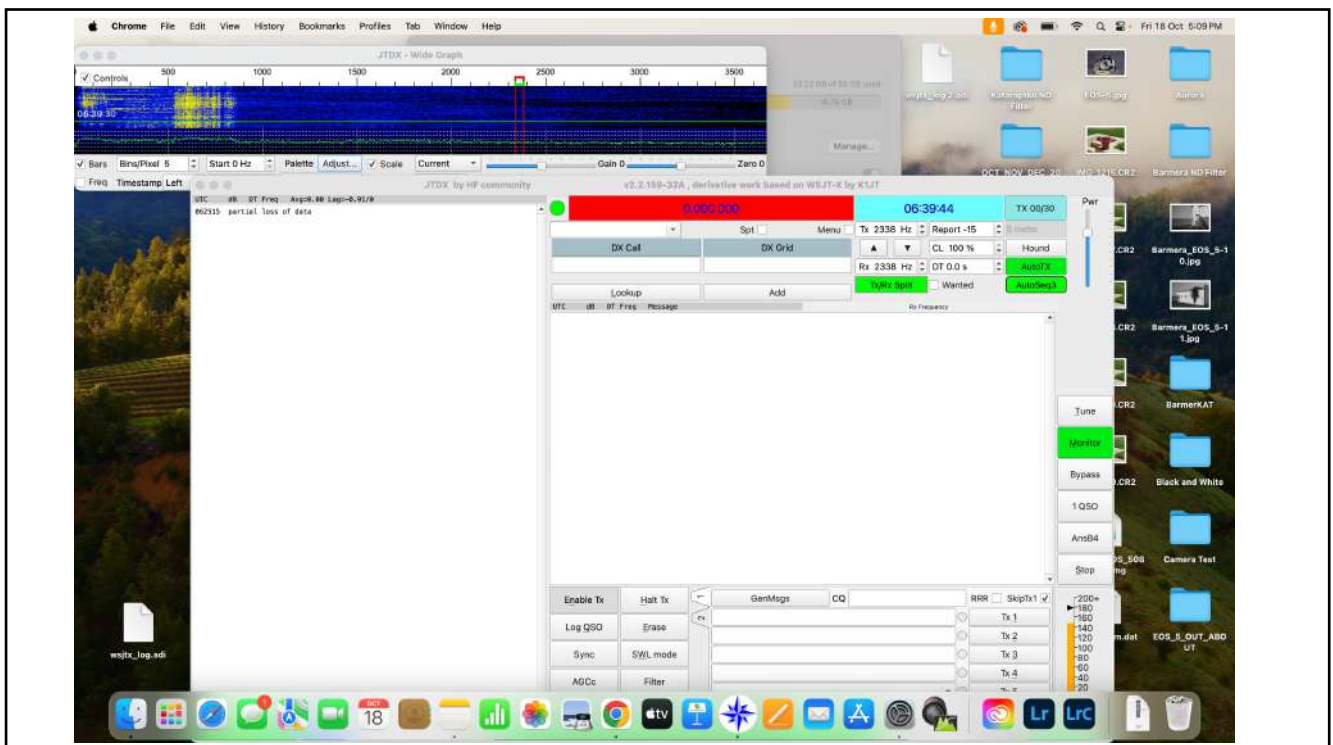
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BECAUSE IT'S FUN!

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But I'm not very good at Morse you say... *sighs*

That's ok, neither am I!

- With VKFF/WWFF CW contacts, the exchange is very simple, and virtually nobody "Ragchews", and wants to know the colour of your socks at 25wpm...
- The contacts are usually just a brief exchange of Good Morning-Afternoon or Evening, Name, a signal report and a 73, that's it, they're in the log!
- An FT8 contact just requires a report, an RR, a 73 and sometimes a grid square. Modes like JS8 Call and others can be more involved, i.e Keyboard to keyboard chat..
- Both CW and Data QSO rates are generally slower than SSB. Muuuuch slower...QSO's per seconds for SSB, minutes for CW and FT8

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On SSB, sometimes you can't...

And then sometimes you can't even on CW...

- But then you probably can on FT8!
- If 'ol Sol isn't playing ball, a shift to a higher band on CW and/or FT8 will likely get you a contact.
- The 10M band can be a gold mine for contacts especially in the morning to the USA, and the afternoons to EU. CQ WWFF, CQ VKFF will often bring results! FT8 seems to always be able to produce a contact to somewhere during the daylight.
- 30M is a killer band, especially for Data modes and you can work the USA one contact and next will be EU.
- 17 and 12 are great for both CW and Data when it's open
- It's worth remembering that if you think the band is dead, check the FT8 frequencies!

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Get yourself spotted...

No phone coverage? No problem!

- SSB contacts might come thick and fast if you have mobile coverage and can self spot, and your not QRP.
- Low power QRP activations can suffer if in a poor service area and conditions are terrible. FT8 often returns calls on a “dead” band
- The RBN (reverse Beacon Network) is your friend on CW and FT8 as you will be automatically spotted to the various channels by simply calling CQ.
- CW/Data skimming looks for CQ de {Callsign} and uploads the call-mode-and signal strength and the location (grid Square) of the calling station.

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The screenshot displays the Spotter tool interface. At the top, a world map shows signal paths between various locations. Below the map is a control panel with a color-coded legend for signal strength (0dBm to -20dBm), a 'Donate' button, and various filter options like 'Show Spotters' and 'Advanced Mode'. The main area contains a table of spotted call signs.

callsign		spotter-callsign	distance mi	freq	mode	type	snr	speed	time	seen
+	J1YHF2	+ J1YVHF	9 mi	7100.0	CW	CG	22 dB	20 wpm	0720z 18 Oct	now
+	ZLJK	GBZL	11420 mi	7117.0	CW	CG	17 dB	24 wpm	0730z 18 Oct	now
+	WVWTS	GBZL	3423 mi	7117.0	CW	CG	17 dB	24 wpm	0730z 18 Oct	now
+	3E0NH	IGIS	610 mi	7122.0	CW	CG	7 dB	23 wpm	0730z 18 Oct	now
+	KYRA	IGIS	4280 mi	7122.0	CW	CG	6 dB	23 wpm	0730z 18 Oct	now
+	DLRGN	DLGUR	218 mi	7128.1	CW	CG	20 dB	25 wpm	0730z 18 Oct	now
+	EACW	DLGUR	868 mi	7128.0	CW	CG	12 dB	25 wpm	0730z 18 Oct	now
+	J1YCSU1	J5NQP2	222 mi	7107.0	CW	CG	12 dB	21 wpm	0730z 18 Oct	now
+	AAQD	GBZL	4280 mi	7117.0	CW	CG	8 dB	20 wpm	0730z 18 Oct	now
+	H84BJE	KOSQ	4658 mi	10114.0	CW	CG	2 dB	21 wpm	0730z 18 Oct	now

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So you want to do CW?

Everyone has to start somewhere, we'd love to hear you!

- Here in VK we love a new CW OP, you will be greeted with open arms!
- 40M morning and afternoons are good places to start as there will be few impatient DX ops and plenty of patient locals who will slow down.
- I highly recommend listening to K4SWL's video's both for receiving practice and exchange practice.
- Buy the best morse key or paddle you can afford, you really get what you pay for.
- Practice Practice Practice Practice sending the exchanges you hear others make
- You will fluff your first contacts but we are an extremely patient mob in VK and we'll get you over the line! Send at what speed you're comfortable with...if that's 5wpm, so be it!
- If you really have an aversion to sending, you could easily program up a rig like the 7300/705 to send the exchanges for you (Demo)

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CW Tips and tricks...

Expect the unexpected!

- SET THE PACE! It's your show...
- 40 metres is probably a good a place to start, I'd recommend running some decent, say 30-50 of power
- In the beginning, perhaps start by adding some CW to the end of an SSB activation
- As you gain confidence, go for longer and try more bands
- 20M afternoon on the longpath into EU on CW can be challenging to say the least?

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The Gear I'm using

Or, "How much Munny you gaht son?"

- You'll pay good money for a decent Morse Key (but I've found a bargain)
- You also pay good money for a crap one. (Woof woof!)
- I have Radio setups for both QRP and "normal"
- The antenna/power levels depend on my goals, the park and conditions
- I use a MacBook Air as it's extremely lightweight and portable
- I like the convenience of USB plug and play radios for FT8
- I prefer a keyer/paddle for activating because the sending and spacing is consistent and your contacts need to understand you - important when QRP and/or conditions are marginal. Some people's straight key sending is let's say "ordinary"

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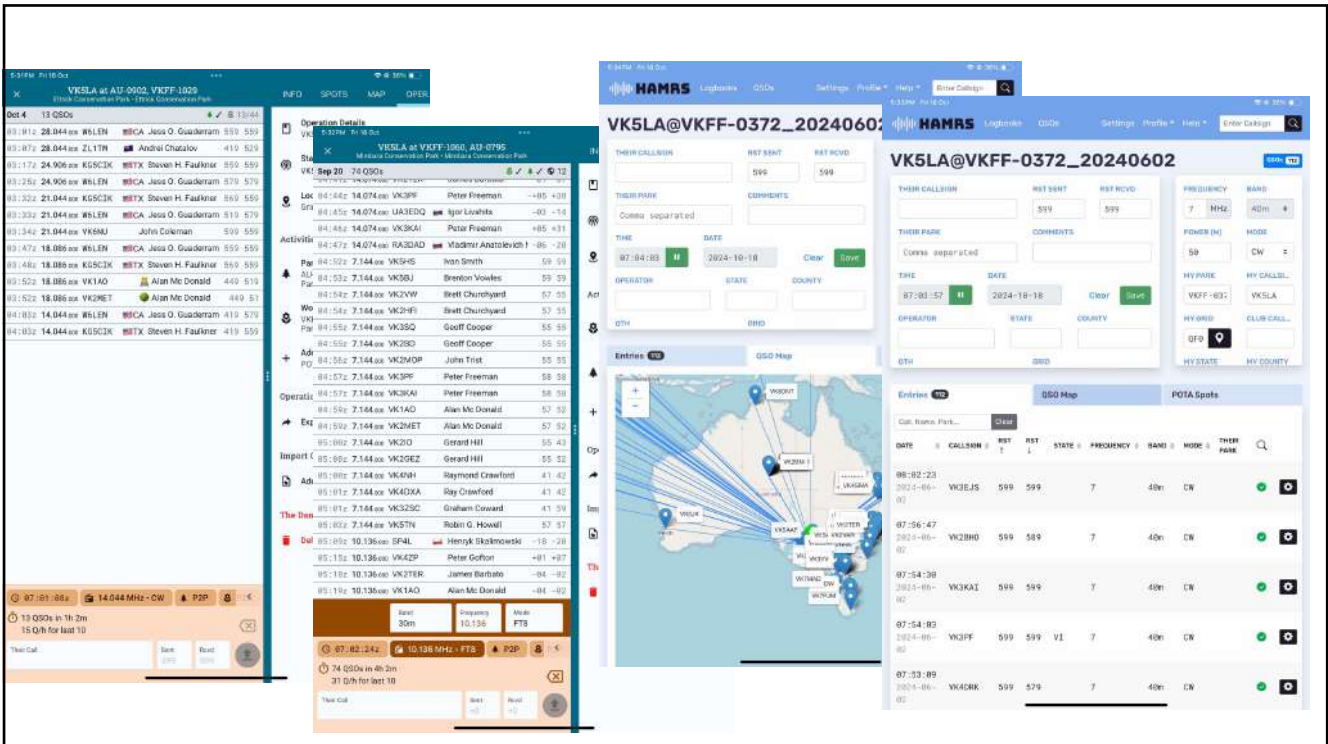
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Logging this contacts

“It’s not Rocket Surgery”

- Paper and pencil works just fine...just put it in to Fast Log entry later and upload...
- There are a number of software programs, VK portalog, Parks and Peaks, HAMRS, Ham2KPOLO etc. etc. platform will dictate
- They all get the job done (HAMRS is program specific and requires modification/conversion for upload to WWFF)
- Try a few and find what works best FOR YOU!
- I use an iPad, and I’m currently using Ham2KPOLO - very impressed
- For FT8, I log on the fly, changing the mode, and entering the signal reports manually
- You could export the FT8 log and merge it with your SSB contacts - “ain’t nobody got time fo dat!”

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FT8 tips and tricks...

“The holiday Mode”

- FT8 is great on the WARC bands
- Great for marginal conditions
- Fantastic for camping and you don't want to be tied to a microphone or key - free to converse with partner/friends and/or do other things while keeping and eye on the screen.
- Probably not the best for fast contacts, but pileups most certainly occur...
- Lots of VK/OS ops look for VK FT8 to boost their park totals
- The mode for “people haters!”

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At the end of the day

CW and FT8/FT4/JS8call/PSK31 are just another mode just like SSB

- CW/DATA only activations very “do-able” for VKFF.
- Mixing it with QRP becomes a challenge, and getting 44 CW/DATA for WWFF would certainly take more time and effort.
- CW and DATA at reasonable power (25> watts) is fun and you’ll work DX you wouldn’t normally, especially on DATA
- Probably not the best modes to use if you have limited time or you want to smash out several parks for the 44 in the course of an afternoon.
- Great for camping! Great if you hate talking to people!
- Remember to have fun!

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Thanks for your time!

Enjoy your hobby and the aspects it provides

- Learning CW has been one of the most rewarding things I've ever done
- Has certainly given my radio interest in AR a big boost
- Amazing DX with CW and Data
- A very enjoyable addition to park activations
- Try it you'll like it!
- Any Questions? Cheers!

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