

**Funny Noises**  
by  
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***Why not a QRP DXpedition?***

Most of you know that my business involves selling CW related products, and so I come into contact with a wide spectrum of amateur radio operators. Naturally I preach the doctrine of QRP whenever and wherever I can, but sometimes there's no point in even mentioning it.

A fellow was looking for a paddle that would be robust and weather-resistant enough to use on DXpeditions. He didn't need a keyer, because he uses CT; he just needed a paddle once in a while when he wanted to send something that wasn't programmed into CT, which he expected to use about 99.9% of the time. Trying to send any other way would "be about as useless as running QRP," he said. I was about to provide him with a brief education, but I bit my tongue-- you don't stay in business if you tell your customers that they are stupid, no matter how idiotic they are!

But it did start the old brain-wheels turning, and I started to wonder why we couldn't have a "real" QRP DXpedition. And that got me thinking about DXpeditions in general, and DXCC in particular.

Technically a DXpedition is a natural for QRP-- everybody in the world desperate to work you, and prepared to take the time for repeats if necessary. Of course QRP power levels would result in a drop in received signal strength. It would only be perhaps a couple of S-points, but if your goal is to get as many "QSO's" into the logbook as possible then you are probably going to see some reduction in your results.

Your typical DXpedition operator and his computer have one goal and only one goal-- to work as many people as possible as quickly as possible. And your typical DX chaser similarly has one and only one goal-- to get a computer generated QSL card saying that he made a non-conversational contact with a computer in a country that doesn't exist.

The ARRL's DXCC program is being substantially revised in the next year or so but in my opinion it is still on the wrong track. As so often happens, they are solving the wrong problem, if as appears to be the case the primary concern is that there aren't enough countries out there and the "superstars" at the top of the honor roll are getting antsy because they don't have anything to do. A better starting point would be to recognize that DXCC is not about radio, it's about QSL cards. Far more time, effort, and money are required to get the piece of paper than to make the "contact." The actual radio contact is a trivial and increasingly meaningless part of the process.

My recommendation for DXCC 2000 is to automate the whole process and do it on the Internet.

Set up a web site and give it a name like "Web Reef." Program the server so the site can only be reached at low tide during a full moon; and generate an auto-response for everybody who "logs on" to it. Cool!

It's a great pleasure for me to tell non-amateurs about my ham radio experiences-- how I can talk to people all over the world while driving on the interstate, using Morse code and 5 watts. I'd have a real hard time trying to explain DXCC to them. "Well, I've "worked" 250 countries but half of them aren't actually countries and the people that I "QSO'd" with don't live there but actually traveled half-way around the world so I can say I "worked" that "country." And they didn't actually talk to me, they pushed a button on their computer. And half of the rest don't count anyhow, because I didn't send the green stamp to buy the card."

Ultimately, I guess, a QRP DXpedition would not make a lot of sense, any more than any DXpedition makes sense. In a very real sense, QRP is the diametric opposite of DXCC-- one reflects the highest principles of amateur radio and the other, all too often the lowest.