

The KeyNote



Newsletter of the Americas Chapter, FISTS CW Club—The International Morse Preservation Society
Issue 1, 2024

All Eyes Turn Upwards as We Approach Sunspot Cycle 25 Maximum

Bryan Bergeron

As a ham radio operator and amateur astronomer, I've tracked the number of sunspots in every 11-year cycle since my youth. As you know, the number of sun spots is correlated with the solar flux, a measure of the ionizing radiation from the sun. The higher the solar flux, the greater the electron density of the ionosphere and the more reflective the ionosphere to HF signals, and the higher the maximum useable frequency. Practically speaking, a higher sunspot count is a sign that 15 and 20 meter CW are available for decent

DX. A lower count and it's relatively short-hop 40 meters.

As we approach the current Cycle 25 maximum in 2025, HF communications are good but not great. Unfortunately, we're at the peak of a relatively small maximum—virtually identical to the past Cycle 24. Fortunately, CW can often break through on a noisy 15m or 20m QSO that would be impossible on SSB.

A generational anomaly associated with Sunspot Cycle 25 is the next total solar eclipse in North America. On April 8, 2024, the total eclipse will be visible from northern Mexico and Texas to New England. The next 11 year cycle will be on us again before we know it, but a total solar eclipse is a once in a lifetime event for most people. Besides the obvious sudden loss of sunlight for up to five minutes, a total solar eclipse enables

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"When you've worked a FISTS, you've worked a friend."

INFORMATION PAGE

When you have a question about FISTS, go to the source for the correct answer. Posting a question on a chat room or email reflector may yield the answer, but your best bet is to ask a FISTS volunteer or look in the reference issue. Several volunteer contacts and/or email addresses have changed from the last reference issue of *The KeyNote*. Please make note of the following listings.

When emailing a volunteer please put the word FISTS in the title of your email. This will help the volunteer recognize that your email is important and not spam.

Awards and Certificates

Dennis Franklin, K6DF, awards@fistsna.org
4658 Capitan Dr., Fremont, CA 94536-5448

Club Call, KN0WCW

“Vacant”

If interested email to:

Joe Falcone, N8TI, store@fistsna.org

Membership Questions; Renewals; Call Changes; Name, Mailing, and Email Address Changes

Dennis Franklin, K6DF, membership@fistsna.org
4658 Capitan Dr., Fremont, CA 94536-5448

FISTS Store Manager

Joe Falcone, N8TI, store@fistsna.org
9880 Musch Road, Brighton, MI 48116

Activities Manager

“Vacant”

If interested email to:

Joe Falcone, N8TI, store@fistsna.org

Website Changes (including getting your personal or club web page linked)

Dennis Franklin, K6DF, webmaster@fistsna.org
4658 Capitan Dr., Fremont, CA 94536-5448

Code Buddy Volunteers and Buddies

<http://www.fistsna.org/codebuddy.php>

FISTS Sprints

Ashley Lambe, KX4ASH

E-logs to sprintlogs@fistsna.org

Mail Logs to: FISTS Sprint Logs

4305 Roundwood Ct.

Indian Trail, NC 28079

The KeyNote Newsletter

Bryan Bergeron, NU1N, keynote@fistsna.org

**We need articles and reviews for
*The KeyNote!***

**NOTE: Image files need to be high resolution
JPGs (at least 1000 pixels wide).**

**Send your Word or text files to
keynote@fistsna.org**

The KeyNote

The Newsletter of the Americas Chapter of FISTS

Issue 1, 2024

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Send articles to:

keynote@fistsna.org

Production: Sandra Lindemann

President's message

By Joe Falcone, N8TI

From time to time, I hear people saying that the cost of ham radio equipment is not affordable or takes up too much space. Well, for CW operations, that could not be further from the truth.

For example, there is a new radio that was introduced in May 2023 from QRP Labs. It is called the QMX multi-band multi-mode transceiver. You can get this radio in either 80, 60, 40, 30 and 20 meter bands or 20,17,15,12,11 and 10 meter bands. The cost of the radio, assembled, with the case, is \$165.00. It is only \$95.00 if you want to build it yourself.

I have the single band 20 meter version of this radio. It works well with a small external battery. In fact, I use a USB to 12 volt adaptor and run it using a laptop or some other USB power source. It has nice selectivity and all the bells and whistles that a CW operator would like. You can read all about it on QRP Labs' website. The single band model is \$40.00 less.

The radio is about the size of a pack of cigarettes. The radio with a small battery along with earphones and a small key makes a very small package. It's a lot of fun to take out to the field, hotel room or to play with on the kitchen table. It has a rugged feel to it and the menus are not too bad. I would say you need a half an hour to play around with it to get your settings the way you want them. From then on, you will have hours of fun.

The perfect antenna to go with this radio, or any QRP radio for that matter, would be a long wire with some form of transformer, such as a 9:1 unun for random wires or 50:1 to make

a half-wave end-fed. The internet will help you figure out the length of a random wire antenna. I use 29 feet into a 9:1 unun and a tuner. It works fine on all bands down to 40 meters. I do lay out a few 30 foot radials. You do need a tuner for a random wire antenna.

A dipole made out of speaker wire by splitting the wire to make the legs and using the unsplit wire as a feedline also works fine. No tuner needed. Speaker wire used as a feed line probably is about 100 ohms. It will work OK. Of course, again, a small tuner is a handy thing to have.

All of those antennas can be put together for anywhere from \$5.00 to \$25.00. In fact, most hams have the materials just laying around ready to be used.

The point is that we are talking about QRP. On one hand having an efficient, no loss antenna system is nice to get the benefit of the full 5 watt output, but on the other hand, is there that much of a difference between 5 watts RF out and 3 watts out? There are a bunch of YouTube videos where guys use a half or a tenth of a watt and make contacts.

Nowadays, when breakfast for two at the local diner will cost you \$30 or a trip to the movies for two people will end up bumping into \$50 with the price of popcorn at \$8.00 to \$10.00, a QRP radio kit for less than \$200 is quite a bargain.

Probably, a lot of us already have QRP radios gathering dust and do not really need to buy a new one, although that's always fun.

With the sunspots on the rampage (sort of), all bands are open and armed with your key, a small radio and some wire, you can get back to basics and have a lot of fun.

73, de Joe, N8TI

FISTS AWARDS

By Dennis K6DF

Congratulations to all who earned operating awards from Nov 15, 2023 to Feb 18, 2024.

Award certificates are available, from the Members Area of the Americas Chapter website, for members to download to their own computer for printing. A list of awards issued to your call/member-number is available in the Members Area. FISTS members may log into the Members Area from the following web page:

<https://fistsna.org/memlogon.php>

New Members can earn a free FISTS Club Key Patch for making their first 10-minute CW QSO with any FISTS member on any band, so get on the air and make your first 10-minute QSO with a FISTS member to earn your free KEY Patch!

New Member Patches Earned:

VA3MWH Mark—QSO with W5WWW

We have a list of new members shown elsewhere in this issue of the *Keynote*. Please listen for them on the bands and help them to earn their FISTS Key Patch!

Award certificates are available free to all club members, in PDF format, so get out your favorite key and get on the air. You can also use the free “Log Converter” program to track your club awards, it’s also a good general logging program as well. The author of Log Converter, Graham G3ZOD, is constantly providing updates and improvements to the program. **This program was last updated on Jan 14, 2024 to version 4.5.0. If you are using a version older than this please update your program as older versions will not work properly due to recent server updates.** This FREE software will track your FISTS awards

automatically and allow you to send in your award logs to the FISTS Awards Manager at the click of a button! The best thing about it is ... it’s FREE! Log Converter is available for download on the Americas Chapter web site. Look for the download link on the main web page just below the “Welcome New Members” list.

Be sure to check the Americas Chapter web pages for updated awards information and how to apply for them:

<https://www.fistsna.org/awards.html>

If you have any award questions or suggestions, send e-mail to me at:

awards@fistsna.org

Wishing you good DX during 2024.
73, Dennis K6DF (30)

FISTS AWARDS ISSUED:

Nov 15, 2023–Feb 18, 2024

Basic Century: WB9G, W4JBB, W8SCS, G4YTK

Silver Century: WB9G

Gold Century: G4KLE

Diamond Century: AF5Z, VA4ADM

1 X QRP: VA4ADM

Millionaire Award: K2FW, WB9G, W4JBB, W8SCS, G4YTK

2 Million Award: K2FW, WB9G, W4JBB, IZ0ONL, W8SCS, G0FOZ

3 Million Award: K2FW, WB9G, M0GSX, W8SCS

4 Million Award: K2FW, WB9G, W8SCS

5 & 6 Million Award: K2FW, WB9G

7 Million Award: K2FW, WB9G, EA4HKE, VA4ADM

8 Million Award: K2FW, VA4ADM

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FISTS AWARDS (continued)

9 Million Award: AF5Z, K2FW, VA4ADM

10 Million Award: AF5Z, K2FW, VA4ADM,
M5ABN, I5ECW, IZ2FME

11 & 12 Million Award: AF5Z, K2FW, VA4ADM,
IZ2FME

13, 14, 15, & 16 Million Award: K2FW

17 Million Award: G4MLW, K2FW

18 Million Award: K2FW, IK0IXI

19 & 20 Million Award: K2FW

21 Million Award: K2FW, NP3K

22, 23, 24, & 25 Million Award: K2FW

Worked All States: W8SCS

Spectrum 40M: WB9G

Spectrum 20M: WB9G

Perpetual Prefix 50: GW0KRL

All Eyes Turn Upwards as We Approach Sunspot Cycle 25 Maximum (continued)

amateur astronomers with a chance to view the sun's corona or outer atmosphere.

If you have a chance to look up on April 8, make sure you have appropriate eye protection. At a minimum, consider a pair of paper "sun" glasses (\$2) from Amazon or other online vendor. A step up is a pair of plastic sun glasses (\$5) or even a pair of sun binoculars (\$50). Although there are specialized solar telescopes that provide narrowband images of the sun (I own several), the cost is prohibitive unless you plan to explore solar astronomy past the eclipse. I track sunspot activity with a relatively small refractor telescope outfitted with a white light filter diagonal and draw the spots by hand (see photo on page 1). Another option is to simply track the solar weather through the NOAA Space Weather Prediction Service (www.swpc.noaa.gov).

73, Bryan, NU1N

JAN. 1, 2021 CHANGES TO AMERICAS CHAPTER MEMBERSHIPS

All Americas Chapter memberships will be dues-free.

- Expired memberships were changed to Life memberships on Jan 1, 2021.
- Current paid memberships that expired were changed to Life memberships on their expiration date.
- All New Memberships received since April 2, 2020 are entered as Life memberships.

Details about printed/mailed newsletter subscriptions appeared in Issue #4, 2024 of the *KeyNote*, which is available on the FISTS website at:

www.fistsna.org/publickeynotes.php

WELCOME NEW FISTS AMERICAS CHAPTER MEMBERS

Call	FISTS#	First Name	S/P/C	Call	FISTS#	First Name	S/P/C
WA2TAX	22313	Paul	NY	K4NNL	22353	James	GA
KZ5Y	22314	Anthony	LA	KE8UCE	22354	Vincent	MI
NV7LV	22315	Dave	NV	KE8CUG	22355	Robert	MI
K9MA	22316	Scott	WI	KO6ANM	22356	Wade	AP
WB0SMZ	22317	Raymond	KS	W7LW	22357	Ed	ID
KO4PGE	22318	Don	GA	K5CYA	22358	Charles	AZ
KF4NOG	22319	Gene	IN	KD9SJC	22359	Michael	IL
WB4OWC	22320	Jerry	AL	KF0ORY	22360	Keith	KS
KB9LBO	22321	David	WI	KF0DST	22361	Adan	CO
KO4KQR	22322	Jonathan	TN	NM9X	22362	Frank	GA
W9OOO	22323	Jacek	MI	KJ5DZD	22363	Jaden	TX
AI5EF	22324	Scott	TX	NZ5U	22364	Howard	NM
N1KUV	22325	Henry	TX	K8XCO	22365	Charlene	MI
K6DCO	22326	James	NV	KD8YZD	22366	Paul	OH
KK7HVN	22327	Dale	AZ	WO1J	22367	Peter	ME
KO4WTM	22328	Randy	FL	KF5RUO	22368	Mike	AR
KI0ER	22329	Roy	CO	KB9QLE	22369	Jean	IL
N0OP	22330	Lawrence	MO	KC7WXD	22370	Jacob	NV
W4DMY	22331	Dorinda	GA	VA3KEI	22371	Keith	ON
KL7KVQ	22332	David	WA	VA7CKD	22372	Chris	BC
KN5EE	22333	Travis	MS	AE0XR	22373	Matt	MO
K2GV	22334	Gerald	NY	KB6TWZ	22374	Mark	CO
VA3MWH	22335	Mark	ON	VE7OSH	22375	Amrit	BC
AA4AI	22336	Bob	GA	KD9REA	22376	Dean	IL
K5TPC	22337	Robert	TX	N7JMG	22377	James	ID
PP5ZX	22338	Marco	DX	KO4NDP	22378	Jason	GA
KF0NUB	22339	Mark	SD	KC1TLE	22379	John	MA
KC9ON	22340	John	MI	AE0SK	22380	Douglas	CO
KQ4MAX	22341	Bill	NC	AG6CK	22381	Chris	CA
K4CIF	22342	Carlos	TX	W1AES	22382	Al	NH
KJ5CMD	22343	Dave	TX	K3HIP	22383	Joshua	PA
WA9CEK	22344	Eric	IL	K7ONI	22384	Leo	MT
KI4GNY	22345	Brian	TN	KM4VI	22385	Tom	TN
KK7NJT	22346	Gabriel	WA	AK6EP	22386	Brian	CA
WI5ARD	22347	Russell	LA	N8ZVX	22387	Bob	MI
W3KEV	22348	Kevin	PA	CO6XE	22388	Emilio	DX
KC9IMA	22349	Kyle	IL	N5DCH	22389	David	NM
KI7UPY	22350	Jay	OR	AD2GZ	22390	Teddy	NY
K5AYO	22351	Craig	TX				
WA7BEN	22352	Ben	WA				

(continued on page 7)

New Members (continued)

Call	FISTS#	First Name	S/P/C
KA3YGL	22391	Bruce	PA
W4MBM	22392	Jay	VA
KC1TRN	22393	Dale	CT
AC6CZ	22394	Charles	CA
VA2JFJ	22395	Jean	QC
KE8ZRG	22396	Steve	MI
KL7RI	22397	John	NV
WB3GM	22398	Glenn	PA
KE7MPO	22399	George	WA
AF3W	22500	Samuel	FL

What's Your Story?

Do you have a story to tell? Members would love to hear how you got interested in ham radio. Did someone mentor you as a child? Did you learn it in the service? What is an interesting experience you had using Morse Code? What is your favorite key/rig? Do you have an interesting QSO you'd like to tell members about? Or photos to share?

Send your stories/photos to keynote@fistsna.org.

Silent Key List

Call	FISTS#	First Name	S/P/C
N9SW	1202	Gene	IL
W8PN	4998	Hal	OH
K4OAH	5011	Grey	GA
W8ILC	5048	Ron	OH
AB0XE	8641	Steve	MN
K2WO	10342	George	FL



Get More Involved in FISTS-NA!

1. Enter one of the quarterly Sprints. If you are a new ham, it is a great way to practice your Morse Code. You can get on the air, meet other club members, and have some fun!
2. Submit an article, or articles, for the newsletter. We welcome all articles, photos, and experience levels. You don't have to be the great American novelist! Articles are lightly edited for typos and grammar.
3. Earn a free FISTS Club Key Patch when you make your first 10-minute CW QSO with any FISTS member on any band.
4. Volunteer! We are currently in need of an Activities Manager.
5. Submit suggestions about how FISTS-NA can be more relevant in 2024 and beyond.

SPRINT INFORMATION

Sprints will be held eight times throughout the year on the second Saturday and third Sunday in each of the following months: Feb., May, Aug, and Nov. Sprints will now run over a 24-hour period.

OBJECTIVE:

To exchange specified information with as many FISTS members as possible using Morse Code only, and within the time frame stipulated. Sprints are a great opportunity for our newer members to get on the air, meet other club members, and have some fun! We encourage more experienced operators to please QRS to match the other operator's speed.

PARTICIPANTS:

Any properly licensed amateur radio operator, FISTS member or non-member is invited to take part in the contest. At least one of the two stations in each QSO must be a FISTS member.

DATES AND TIMES:

SATURDAY SPRINT: from 0000 UTC to 2359 UTC on second Saturday in Feb., May, Aug., and Nov.

SUNDAY SPRINT: from 0000 UTC to 2359 UTC on third Sunday in Feb., May, Aug., and Nov.

BANDS:

Operation is limited to the following amateur bands: 3.5, 7, 14, 21, and 28 MHz amateur bands. Look for other participants around the FISTS frequencies: 3558, 7058, 14058, 21058, and 28058 kHz. You may NOT work the same station more than once.

ENTRY CLASSES:

There are three entry classes: QRO, QRP, and Club.

1. **QRO:** Over 5 watts to legal limit.
2. **QRP:** 5 watts output power or less.
3. **Club:** (regardless of power).

Entry class MUST be shown on logs to be considered for entry in a particular class, or will be assumed QRO. An entry must be ONE class only, no combination of classes allowed.

EXCHANGE:

The following information must be exchanged by both stations and shown in your log for each QSO to count as a valid QSO:

FISTS members: RST, S/P/C, first name, FISTS number. *Non-FISTS members:* RST, S/P/C, first name. (Enter "0" Zero if your logging program requires a power entry for non-members.) S/P/C = U.S. State/Canadian Province/DXCC Country

DX COUNTRY STATUS:

U.S. states and Canadian provinces are those states and provinces that are contiguous and found within the North American continent. DX are those entities listed in the current ARRL DXCC publication, other than the above.

MULTIPLIERS:

Each U.S. state (50) and Canadian province (13) counts as 1 multiplier. Count each only once, no matter how many times worked. Each DXCC country counts as 1 multiplier. Count each only once, no matter how many times worked. Canada and the USA do not count as DX multipliers

BONUS POINTS:

If the submitted Sprint log has a total of 25 or more listed QSO's, a bonus of 250 points will be added to the final calculated score.

SCORING:

Each QSO with a FISTS member: 5 QSO points. Each QSO with a non-FISTS member: 2 QSO points. Final score is total QSO points times the number of multipliers worked, then Bonus points are added.

CERTIFICATES:

Certificates will be awarded to the first, second, and third place finishers in each Sprint for each Entry Class. End-of-Year Certificates will be awarded ONLY to FISTS members with the highest cumulative point totals in the QRO, QRP and Club categories for all Sprints at the end of the year. Certificate will be sent to the winners via email in PDF format.

New Sprint Information (continued)

LOG SUBMISSIONS:

All log entries must be received within 7 days after the Sprint to be considered valid. Logs not sent to the proper address will not be considered for entry. The logs will be spot-checked for accuracy and correct scoring procedures. All logs **MUST** contain the following information for entry:

1. Your name, call sign, mailing address, and FISTS Number if a member.
2. Club name and call sign if entry is for a club station.
3. Sprint worked—Date of the Sprint worked.
4. Entry class—QRO, QRP, or Club.
5. Number of FISTS members worked.
6. Number of non-FISTS worked.
7. FISTS number for FISTS QSOs.
8. List of multipliers.
9. Your claimed score.

An entry form is available here and on the FISTS website at:

https://fistsna.org/pdfdocs/sprint_entry_form_rev2.pdf

ELECTRONIC LOGS:

We will accept electronic logs in standard Cabrillo or ASCII Text File format. If you're not sure about your format, please contact the Sprint Manager before the contest entry deadline. E-logs are sent to:

sprintlogs@fistsna.org ONLY.

PAPER LOGS:

Send log and entry form to:
FISTS Sprint Log
4305 Roundwood Ct.
Indian Trail, NC 28079

WINTER SPRINT RESULTS

Saturday, Feb 10, 2024

QRO Category

Call	Name	Fists #	QTH	QSO's	Mem	Non-Mem	Points	Bonus	Multi	Score
WB9HFK	Mark	7606	IL	62	30	32	214	250	19	4316
N5TML	Tim	21761	TX	18	11	7	69	0	13	897
KA8HFN	Larry	11631	OH	5	5	0	25	0	4	100
K4BAI	John	2158	GA	3	0	0	15	0	2	30

Club Category

Call	Name	Fists #	QTH	QSO's	Mem	Non-Mem	Points	Multi	Score
No Logs Received									

QRP Category

Call	Name	Fists #	QTH	QSO's	Mem	Non-Mem	Points	Multi	Score
No Logs Received									

SOAPBOX ... No Comments Submitted

Sunday, Feb 18, 2024

QRO Category

Call	Name	Fists #	QTH	QSO's	Mem	Non-Mem	Points	Bonus	Multi	Score
IU3BRO	Tilio	22451	ITALY	30	2	28	66	250	20	1570
KA8HFN	Larry	11631	OH	1	1	0	5	0	1	5

Club Category

Call	Name	Fists #	QTH	QSO's	Mem	Non-Mem	Points	Multi	Score
No Logs Received									

QRP Category

Call	Name	Fists #	QTH	QSO's	Mem	Non-Mem	Points	Multi	Score
No Logs Received									

SOAPBOX ... No Comments Submitted

FISTS SPRINT ENTRY FORM

Check Sprint Entered: Saturday _____ Sunday _____ Sprint Date _____

Entry Class: QRO _____ QRP _____ FISTS Club _____

Name _____ Call _____ FISTS # _____ Non Member _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

If Club, Club Name, Call _____ FISTS Nr. _____

E-mail Address (optional) _____

SCORING: Number of FISTS member QSOs: _____ × 5 = Total [A] _____
 Number of Non-FISTS QSOs: _____ × 2 = Total [B] _____
 Number of multipliers worked: _____ = Total [C] _____

Add [A] to [B] and multiply by [C] to get your TOTAL CLAIMED SCORE = _____

----- **CIRCLE WORKED MULTIPLIERS** -----

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	VE	DX
CT	NY	DE	AL	AR	CA	AZ	MI	IL	CO	NB	NF/LB
MA	NJ	MD	FL	LA		ID	OH	IN	IA	NS	NT
ME		PA	GA	MS		MT	WV	WI	KS	PE	YK
NH			KY	NM		NV			MN	QC	BC
RI			NC	OK		OR			MO	ON	
VT			SC	TX		UT			NE	MB	
			TN			WA			ND	SK	
			VA			WY			SD	AB	
						AK					

Please enclose paper logs ONLY, photos, comments, ideas, etc., with your entry and mail promptly to:

FISTS Sprint Logs
 4305 Roundwood Ct.
 Indian Trail, NC 28079

Statement: "I have observed all FISTS Sprint competition rules as well as all regulations for Amateur Radio in my country. My report is correct and true to the best of my knowledge. I agree to be bound by the decisions of the FISTS Awards Committee."

Date _____ Signature _____ Call sign _____

SOAPBOX COMMENTS: