
VHF/UHF – An Expanding World

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Weak Signal

Things have really quietened down lately. A number of the more active stations have either taken holidays in warmer climes or pulled their towers down to work on antennas in preparation for next summer. It is also hard to be attracted to the dark depths of the cold shack when the option is to sit in front of the warm fire/central heating wasting brain cells on what little the TV offers. Hmm, it's a toss up really!

Some diversion has been offered in the form of the GippsTech conference held at Churchill, Victoria in the first weekend in July. About 85 amateurs from around VK and ZL attended, many organising driving holidays to coincide with the attendance. As well as the many excellent technical presentations given, the conference provided the opportunity to catch up with people you may have spoken to many times but have never actually met. This can be a bit of a shock as the mental picture of the person you have formed is usually quite wrong. The highlight of the conference for me was the attendance of Joe Taylor W1JT – the author of the WSJT program. All of the conference presentations were of a very high standard and provided much of interest for the weak signal VHF/UHF/Microwave operator. Congratulations to all the organisers from the WIA Eastern Zone Amateur Radio Club for organising such a good event. The next conference is scheduled for July 3 & 4, 2004 so mark that in your diaries now.

Robbie VK3EK and his "150" net continues to attract a crowd. On 11/6, the net attracted 11 stations including VK3RS, VK3HV, VK3AUU, VK3ZUX, VK3AXH, VK3HZ, VK3AJN, VK2KRR, VK3KAI and VK3YDK. It was the 162nd running of the weekly net which now operates on any or all of 144.150, 432.150, 1296.150, 2403.150 and 50.130 as requested by participants. The net commences on 144.150 each Wednesday evening at 2030 AEST.

2 m & 70 cm FM DX

Conditions are really quieting down now as we move into winter. Only one significant ducting period noted for the southeastern states in June, plus a few periods of slight enhancement, and no reports of any other activity from other parts of Australia.

The one major duct over June in the southeastern states, began on Tuesday the 17th, peaked on the 18th and 19th and had finished in the evening of the 20th.

Initially noted on the 17th were much-improved signals from certain 70 cm repeaters, being: VK3RMU, Mt. St. Leonard (Melbourne) on 438.075, with a massive 60dB+ signal here (290 km); VK3RMG, on 439.950 in Yea, at S7 (253 km); VK3RWU at the Grampians on 438.675 at S9 (471 km); and Melbourne's Kinglake 439.450 noted at S7. The usual 2 m devices were also making the grade, such as Ararat, Ballarat, Otway Ranges and Bendigo.

On the 18th things got a bit more interesting. As well as most of the 70 cm repeaters mentioned from the previous day, there were several others, including VK3RMM, Mt Macedon on 439.275, which was S9+10dB (324 km) and VK3RUG at Eildon on 438.175 at S9+20dB (241 km). On 2 m, the duct dug out some interesting signal paths. Warrnambool, VK3RWL on 147.050 made the grade with an S5 signal from over 500 km away. VK3RGL at Geelong on 147.000 was in at S5. The Otway

Ranges, VK3ROW on 147.275 was a good S6 (486 km). VK2JDC, Dave from Parkes was heard making the trip into the Canberra repeater 146.950, in QSO with Rob VK1ZQR. Dave then followed this effort up with a call in to the Shepparton Club net on 146.650 VK3RGV, which took the guys at Shepparton by surprise. This was a 440 km trip for Dave. Later VK2TLH, Lindsay, located just south of Bathurst, was also able to call into the Shepparton Net. This was a 503 km journey and good to hear a few stations in central VK2 jumping into VK3. Ken, VK3HKR in Melbourne was interestingly quite audible into the Wagga repeater VK2RWG on 146.750 while talking to VK3HAO Larry via the Ballarat repeater on the same frequency. Later in the night maximum distances were achieved - these being signals on 146.900 from the Mt. Gambier repeater VK5RMG (630 km). Stations worked were VK5DJ John, VK5DK Colin, who was also received on reverse, and VK5WCC Bill. The signal from Mt Gambier was only S4. Flexing its DX muscle again, from 11.30 pm to 12 midnight, was VK5RMB the Murray Bridge repeater on 146.875 (733km). The signal was quite low up to about S4. Stations worked were VK5ZMB Brian at Gawler and VK5HS Ivan in Renmark.

On the 19th signals were much lower. In the morning it was good to hear Phillipa VK2XPH, 50 km NE of Bathurst, making it easily into the Canberra repeater 146.950, speaking with VK2HBJ Keith in Wagga.

On Friday the 20th the duct was still slightly active, but very weak and limited. One unusual contact was simplex on 2 m with VK3LO Colin in Essendon.

A new website has been set up called the VK VHF FM DX Group. This is designed to complement the email group's activities. The site is available at www.users.bigpond.com/vkvhffmdx/. This site has been produced to cater for the interests of Australian Amateur Radio Operators who are interested in 'long haul' FM DX work, and to give others an insight into just what is possible using 'only' FM. Why not join the group and let others know you are listening. A number of interesting competitions have been set up for the group.

On the site you will find the '2 & 70 FM DX 2003 / 2004 Season Tally Table'. The Season Tally is basically a log of achievement on 2 & 70 FM for a single season only. A season is a 12-month period beginning on the 1st July each year. The idea of the long time period is to take in all seasons, starting in the cold winter months when signals don't travel too far, to the warmer air inversion summer months, when signals can cover great distances, and then back into winter again. You are able to submit your station's logs for the season table at the start of each month. Categories in the table are: Number of 2 m Repeaters worked, Number of 70 cm repeaters worked, Total repeaters worked, Maximum distance to 2 m repeater, Maximum distance to 70 cm repeater, Maximum distance simplex on 2 m and Maximum distance simplex on 70 cm. You can find more information by visiting the website. The amount of interest in the table will determine its future.