



ZERO BEAT

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



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Winter Field Day

PPRAA kicked off 2024 with a successful Winter Field Day on January 27-28 at Cheyenne Mountain State Park. This year we opted to compete as a class 2M station, meaning that we ran two stations... and also that we could stay warm inside campers, rather than trying to keep heat in a soft-walled tent outdoors! This strategy served us well as we made 550 contacts in 42 states (not including HI, MA, MS, MT, NM, ND, SD, or WY), 7 out of 10 provinces of Canada, and DX contacts in Brazil, United Kingdom, Ireland, South Africa, Belgium, Italy, and France. We also had great opportunities to socialize with fellow hams, get some less-experienced operators on the air, and try some new approaches to gear.

LD / W0XLD ran the JS8Call station (FT8 is not permitted for winter field day, as it is not very useful for emergency communications situations). His antenna was a pair of screwdriver mobile antennas in a V configuration, about 35 feet up on a guyed mast. With coil loading on both sides of the dipole, this created an extremely narrow-band antenna which could be tuned by operating the screwdriver motors from switches inside the camper. This allowed changing bands without having to go out in the cold at night, and we had hoped that the very narrow bandwidth of the antenna would reject same-band interference from the voice station.



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Winter Field Day cont...

The lesson learned from the digital station was that, when operating on the same band as the voice station, we still did receive a little voice interference. Fortunately, the JS8 weak-signal mode ignored the voice bleeding into the station and we did not notice any impact on the software's ability to decode signals. So we made 70 digital contacts, from coast to coast in the US and across the Atlantic for two DX contacts in Europe.

Ken / K0KWH provided the voice station in his always-comfortable fifth-wheel camper (and his XYL treated us to her awesome chili again this year... thanks Jen!). He used a ham-stick dipole on a mast and an end-fed half wave antenna with transmatch tuner. With a variety of operators rotating through, his station made 472 HF contacts, and a 2-meter antenna on the mast was used for an additional 8 VHF FM contacts.

A lesson learned from the voice station was not about Ken's station... but about the adjacent campers! LD's and Tom's campers are equipped with the camper manufacturers' least-expensive, made-in-China voltage converters to charge their house batteries, and they do not comply with FCC emissions regulations. So LD and Tom had to throw the circuit breakers to turn off their house battery chargers, otherwise a horrible hash was produced that would wipe out the voice frequencies on several bands. LD considers this interference problem to be a mixed blessing, as he may now be able to justify an upgrade to a LiFePO4 battery (and a higher-quality charger) in his camper in the near future.

Thanks to all PPRAA and community members who came out to help with setup, teardown, operations, food, and just being friendly. Winter field day usually has a small turnout due to the cold, but each one who showed up was appreciated for fellowship, helpful hands, and good company.



Upcoming Events

March 13: Membership meeting will be held at 1900 (7 pm) at

Golden Corral Buffet, 1970 Waynoka Rd, Colorado Springs CO 80915.

Come an hour early to eat and socialize.



Visit with the Astronauts

On January 31, several members of PPRAA attended "Visit with the Astronauts" at Harrison High School in support of the Thrive Home School Academy's space curriculum. PPRAA is working with Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS), ARRL, and NASA to arrange a ham radio contact between Thrive students and astronauts on the ISS this spring, and a few of these members were able to attend the presentation from retired astronauts General Kevin Chilton (USAF Ret.) and Lt. Gen. Susan Helms (USAF Ret.). The astronauts were quite accessible in telling their stories about training for and working in space, and were very kind and clear-spoken in answering students' questions. Lt. Gen. Helms told a story that was especially meaningful to hams, as she had enjoyed calling CQ on 146.520 MHz while she was orbiting in the space shuttle or ISS, and talking to any random hams that would answer!

PPRAA continues to work with hardware and systems for the upcoming ISS flyover, but in the meantime the invitation to see these gifted speakers, scientists, and public servants was a welcome benefit to our partnership with the Thrive Home School Academy.



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Soldering Class



A Saturday workshop was convened on February 24 at Kathy / AE0UX and Rick's / KE0GVU workshop and classroom in Falcon, where David / AD0QD provided some "elmering" (mentorship) on soldering and electronic fabrication. Thanks to Kathy, Rick, and David for providing the resources for this event, and all attendees who made it a fun time. The club will be hosting more events throughout 2024.



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Save the Date

Jul. 27: The Megafest ham festival is back at Lewis-Palmer High School in 2024! The address is 1300 Higby Rd, Monument CO 80132. Vendors may set up at 0600; doors will be open 0800-1300 for attendees. If you would like to rent a table for the event, please visit <https://ppraa.org/megafest> for details.

We would love to have your help in selling raffle tickets in advance! Please email megafest@ppraa.org to coordinate getting the tickets and returning the proceeds for advance ticket sales. The grand prize for the raffle is a Icom IC-705 go-kit, complete with Icom backpack and Chameleon Modular Portable Antenna. Other prizes are listed on the webpage as well.

Date TBD: Mobile Radio Car Show will return in 2024, by popular demand! The location and date will be determined as we plan for warmer-weather events, but we wanted to let you know well in advance that we will be awarding prizes for the coolest ham radio install in your car, off-road 4x4, motorcycle, electric scooter, or Ironman jetpack. If your ham radio can be used on-the-go, we want to see how you did it, learn from your experience, and get ideas for our own mobile radio projects. We hope your winter projects will lead to awesome mobile stations to exhibit this year!

Contact Zero Beat

Do you have photos of PPRAA events you'd like to share, or news from the ham radio world that the club might like to hear? Please email zerobeat@ppraa.org to share your ideas and pictures.